

ELLEN ADAIR

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ELLEN ADAIR

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JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

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A TALE THAT IS TOLD



Poems:

A LOVER OF THE LAND

ELLEN ADAIR

By
FREDERICK NIVEN



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ELLEN ADAIR

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CHAPTER I

IN a little hall off Nicolson Street, in Edinburgh, was the sound of violins; but the whisper of dancing-pumps on the waxed floor was decreasing in volume, the dancers going home in ones and twos and threes. The attendant was busy in the cloakroom, disentangling wrappings. Cabs drove up to the curb; their doors slammed, and they drove away with flushed, bright-eyed occupants.

Still Ellen—Ellen of Crown Street—danced. It was her first dance, real dance, that is. Tom, her younger brother, Louise, her elder sister, were there also. It was, indeed, because of Tom that they were here at all. Six months ago he had not known the first steps of dancing; but when, in his drawling, heavy way, he had remarked that a society of which he was a member was going to give a dance, his sisters had seen the opportunity of (as Ellen, reader of *The Society Gossip* termed it) “coming out.” They were very sweet to Tom, taught him to do something with his legs and feet that might reasonably pass for dancing, and had their reward, for they were now at their first real dance.

Time flew. It was long after midnight; only about a third of the dancers remained, and Louise, awakening to realization that the third was not of the *élite*, found her way to Ellen.

“We must be going, Ellen,” she said.

“Och, go on, Louise. I am just beginning to enjoy myself.”

Tom drew near.

“I think we’d better go,” he said stolidly; but the violins played and Ellen was dancing again.

Earlier in the evening, Mrs. Adair had advised her departing family thus: “If anyone asks you if you have ordered a cab, you can say you ’phoned up too late, and that you don’t know if one is coming for you or not—or you can say that you think, after all, you would rather walk, for the sake of the air, after the hot ball; or you can say that as Tom is with you, and it is such a little way, you’d rather run home by the short-cuts. I leave it to you, girls. There is no need to spend on a cab.”

Louise eventually went downstairs and donned her coat, and tucked up her pretty head in a white scarf, and, returning to the portico of the hall, waited there to catch Ellen's eye—which was no easy matter. Ellen was in the seventh heaven, dancing with a young man whose beady little eyes twinkled through gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"The fun's only beginning," he said.

"Oh, there's my sister all ready to go. Good-night. She'll be off without me."

"Thank you for the great pleasure. You dance divinely," said the youth.

Coming out of the hall, a few minutes later, the girls tilted their heads contemptuously when the sound of "Cab! Cab!" came to their ears, and off they tripped homeward, Tom pausing to light a cigarette at the door, then running after them, passing them a few paces, whirling around there and bowing to them, spinning about and whirling ahead like a human whip-top, whipped along the vacant street by an invisible Spirit of Derision.

He was delighted, after all, with the dance. He felt that he had come through it without making a fool of himself. He had not slipped on the floor, despite his repeated inclination to do so. Upon the two occasions on which he had wandered onto the hem of a dress, he had removed, with cumbrous agility, before anything untoward befell. Only on one of these occasions had he heard a stitch go pop somewhere about the waist of the wearer of the train on which he stood; with angry, contemptuous eyes and smiling lips the lady had accepted his apology: "Don't mention it. It's quite all right. *My* fault."

So now he pirouetted before his sisters along the empty street holding up his left arm in air, curving his right round an invisible partner. Behind, giggling, laughing, humming, came Ellen and Louise, arm in arm, squeezing each other's hands, looking each to each, ever and again, when there seemed signs of the risibility flagging, and then breaking into fresh peals. They kept step, pit-pat, with their pointing toes, heads thrown up, and buoyant like two freshly oiled automata. Under the moon they sped up the hazy chasm of Nicolson Street, their dancing dervish of a brother ahead of them. So they returned homeward, until they saw, among the dotted line of lamps, the one at the corner of Crown Street, the Meadows.

The sisters called to the advance escort:

"Tom! Tom, wait a minute!"

He waited under a lamp, rather a loutish figure, his loose gray coat hanging from his shoulders as from a broom standing on end, a large cream-colored scarf bunched round his neck and tucked-in in front.

"No! Don't go on—wait!" Ellen cried.

"Wait, Tom!" Louise called peremptorily—for Tom showed signs of frisking on again, dog-like, ahead of them. He waited for them to make up on him.

"Remember not to go up Crown Street like that, Tom," she admonished.

"Why? What's the trouble?"

"The neighbors."

"Neighbors, pooh!" He began to pirouette again.

"Yes—the neighbors," said Louise definitely, and tossed her head; then, disclosing a gleaming forearm, she tucked the disturbed scarf under her chin.

"They're all in bed," said Tom.

"Well, let them sleep. If they waken up and hear you dancing along like that——"

"And you screaming and skirling," Tom suggested.

"We're not screaming and skirling," Ellen contradicted. "We don't want them to know we didn't come home by cab. You know what neighbors are."

"I see," said Tom.

His face went heavy and lugubrious like an overfed infant's; and, hands deep in his coat-pockets, chin deep in his scarf, he walked beside the girls to Crown Street corner, while they peeped each to each under drooping lids, each showing the other a three-quarter face and a little bit of the chin's underside; and as Ellen tilted her head so the little lumpy part at the end of her nose, which, when she held her head low, seemed just a lump and nothing more, was as a sign of insolence.

They all turned quietly into Crown Street, a long street of little houses and flats standing back from the pavement behind six feet of garden, these gardens being tended by those who lived in the alternate "front-door houses"—for all the way along the street there was a regular alternation of "front-door house" and "close-door." At either side of the "close-doors" were three bells, each bell being of the flats above. On each landing was a brass knob, set in a brass slit in the hall; and when the bell rang in a flat, the inhabitant stepped onto the landing, pulled the brass knob up in the brass-edged slit and so, by an arrangement of chains and pulleys, opened the street-door. But the people who lived in the "front-door houses" (that is, ground-floor flat, or *maisonnette*) thought themselves more valuable citizens than those in the flats above. They had their garden; they had their real front door. And Mrs. Adair had brought her family here to this house because she

would rather have a front door in the Meadows than a flat in Morningside. Meantime, when people spoke of Morningside as being a desirable locality, she said it had one drawback—it suggested the Morningside Asylum for the Insane. But nevertheless she had an eye on Morningside, and would not forget when she could manage to make her husband pluck up courage to get a better situation.

Tom opened the little gate with a flourishing parody of secrecy and suavity; with parody of magnificence his sisters sailed into the railed-in pen.

“They are sitting up in the front room,” said Tom.

“The drawing-room,” Ellen corrected.

The vestibule was so narrow that the front door had of necessity to be of two portions. One-half was now closed. Ellen slipped inside and rattled upon the inner glass door with her knuckles. Light showed within as the front-room door was opened, and Mrs. Adair hastened to give entrance to her family. She shepherded them to the sitting-room, where Mr. Adair, a weak arrangement of protruding knees and long-fingered, knuckly hands, and collapsed head on shoulder, sat snoring in the easy, chair, an *Evening Dispatch* at his feet, all the amusement garnered out of its “Notes and Comments,” as he called the column whence he gathered his sole edification.

Tom was slowly taking off his coat in the little entrance alley called the hall, and slipping his scarf round a peg, as Mrs. Adair turned her daughters about under the incandescent gaslight, turning them round somewhat as scholars turn revolving book-cases in other men’s houses.

“Your hair has kept very nicely, Ellen. You look well, Louise. Tell me about it,” she said. “How did it all come off?”

Tom entered like a Saint Bernard pup.

“Got any cheese in the house?” he asked. “I’m hungry.”

“Oh, cheese it!” cried Ellen, who pirouetted and pealed with laughter, in which her mother and sister joined.

“Take care, girl; you’ll break the gas-mantle!” warned her mother.

The noise disturbed Mr. Adair. He came half-awake, with a choking little snore, and fumbled on his knees with those long-fingered hands, groping for the *Evening Dispatch*.

“Oh, it’s the girls back,” he said, stooped and lifted his paper—on the third attempt. “Well, and how did you enjoy your dance?”

“Fine,” said Louise.

“And you, Ellen?”

“Eh?” said Ellen.

"Ellen, you shouldn't say 'Eh?' " Mrs. Adair admonished. "I hope you didn't say 'Eh?' to anybody at the dance."

"What do you think?" said Ellen. "I know better than that."

Mrs. Adair sighed.

"I have tried to train you," she said.

"She's all right." Mr. Adair spoke. "It's only me. Well, girls, you look fine—I'm glad you've enjoyed yourselves. How did you like it, Tom?"

"Fine! I'm hungry. Got any cheese, mother?"

"I'm hungry, too," complained Ellen.

"Come on out into the kitchen," said Louise.

"Remember your complexion, girls—so late, and you're just going to bed," Mrs. Adair cautioned.

"Well, I'll lock up now, I suppose," said the old man, smoothing his evening paper, then folding it up. "Here's the *Dispatch*. I'll put it at the side of the vent there, for kindlin' the fire in the morning."

"Vent! Father!" exclaimed Mrs. Adair. "Chimney, you mean."

"Aye, aye, chimbley," he mumbled.

"That's right. Now, you girls, now I'll tell you what—have a cup of koko-ah before you go to bed. There's some milk. Your father didn't take any to the rice-pudding. We'll soon heat that. If I make it with hot milk for you it will be all the better—coming in out of the cold."

The family passed to the kitchen—father excepted. He, grunting and blowing, closed the front door, bolted it, closed the inner door, locked it; his shuffling steps sounded as he potted in the front room; he pushed chairs into their proper places, then called out:

"Are any of you coming into the front room again, or will I put out the gas?"

"Anybody going into the drawing-room—you girls?" asked Mrs. Adair, eying the milk-pan on the gas-stove, Ellen and Louise leaning against the table, palms on it, staring and smiling at the calendar over the mantelpiece without seeing it, Tom sitting on the table nursing a leg.

"Eh? No," from Ellen.

"No, thank you," from Louise.

"All right, father," Mrs. Adair called in response. "We've done in the drawing-room. You can put out the gas."

"I haven't seen the *Dispatch* to-night," said Tom. "I wonder if there's anything good in the 'Notes and Co-ments.' "

"Tom wants the *Dispatch*," Mrs. Adair called again. "Have you put out the gas?"

"It's here—it's here. I'll get it. O-oh!"

"What is it?"

"I knocked my heed on the mantelpiece. It's all right—I've got it."

"Look out, mother!" Ellen screamed. "Boiling."

Mrs. Adair whipped the pan off with: "All right, dear, all right. Now, here's just enough for the three of you."

The old man shuffled in, and held out the *Dispatch* to Tom, who paid no attention.

"Here!" said Mr. Adair.

"Eh? Oh, aye. Thank you, father. Anything good?"

"Well, there's a joke that you may care for. It's not bad. It's a play upon words. Good-night all. I'm glad you enjoyed yourselves."

"Say good-night to your father," said Mrs. Adair.

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

"Good-night, father."

"And how did you get on? Tell me all about it," said Mrs. Adair, as the cocoa was being sipped by the girls and drunk out of a saucer by the thick-lipped Tom.

"Fine! I love dancing," answered Ellen. "Wasn't that a lovely necklace, Louise, yon dark girl had on?"

And so they chatted of necklaces, and frocks, and hose, and ribbons, till Tom said: "Well, good-night all. I've got to get up in the morning," and went away to his little bedroom.

"Are you finished, girls?" asked the mother. "Because if you are, we'd better all go to bed, I think."

When the girls entered the bedroom that they shared, they blew out sighs of relief. Louise turned up the "peep" of gas that revealed the big bed with the arched and padded headpiece—a "fine piece of furniture"—the dressing-table, another "fine piece" of solid, substantial furniture laden with combs and brushes, a china dolphin carrying a shell in which were thrust wisps of hair-combings. There were little china dishes, too, to hold hairpins, painted with crude pictures of Portobello Pier, of the Bass Rock, and announcing themselves, in gilt lettering, as presents from Portobello or from North Berwick. The gaslight twinkled on them, and on the tarnished silver top of a

huge scent-bottle that Jimmie Ray, son of the Ray, of Walker and Ray, jewelers, Leith Street, had given to Ellen last Christmas.

Ellen closed the door, with covert air, as Louise turned up the light. Louise threw herself down on the folded-back quilt, face down, and putting her chin on folded arms, raised her heels in the air and stared at a twinkling brass handle on the wardrobe, then let her eyes rove over its surface sheen. Ellen drew a chair opposite to the long, upright wardrobe mirror, sat down there, hands in lap, feet crossed, and considered her reflection.

“What a time,” she said, softly. “What did that fellow you danced with twice say to you, Louise?”

“How?” asked Louise, tapping her heels together and then bringing them down to touch the back of her head.

“I saw the way you looked at him over in yon corner. You were having him on.”

“Oh, he was comic,” said Louise, and laughed gently.

“You did have yon black-haired chap on something awful, didn’t you?” persisted Ellen.

“A little bit,” and Louise laughed again. “Men are easy.” She extended one foot and kept the other gently rising and falling. “I choked him off at last.”

“You’re a rare hand at that. You’re awful good at it. I saw you looking at him—like this,” and Ellen imitated. “No—that’s not it. I don’t do it as well as you. Show me, Louise.”

Louise elevated herself on stiff arms, hands pressed down, fingers extended, raised her head, showed her sister the subtle expression so, and then sank down again. Ellen laughed with delight and gave a little chuckle.

“I made that chap I danced with second apologize,” she said.

“He looked properly had.”

“You know he said he would like to kiss me.”

“Ellen!”

“Yes. I got him on as far as that. He said: ‘I’d like to kiss that soft little bit under your chin.’ He was daft. I made him apologize.”

“How?”

“I said, ‘Excuse yourself.’ ”

“Did you, though. What did he say?”

“He said, ‘Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn’t know. Don’t be silly.’ Then I choked him off. ‘I thought you were a gentleman,’ I said.”

“Ellen! Did you?”

“Ah-ha. But he isn’t a gentleman. He’s nobody. He lives in Marchmont Road. I would like,” said Ellen, “to go on instead of choking them off—just for fun.”

“Would you? What for?”

“Just to see. You look so cool. I always get excited.”

Louise concentrated her gaze on her sister suddenly.

“Anyhow,” Ellen went on, “I did enjoy myself. It’s so different dancing with men to dancing with girls at the class—it’s so different, dancing with men.” She showed her pretty, shining teeth, her full red lips curving. “I danced three times with yon fellow Scott—no, four! He’s a gentleman. I think he’s in yon insurance office at the corner of George Street—or an architect. I’m going to ask Tom. He’s a gentleman, anyway. But I think he would be *game*, too. I can’t stand a sumph. I like a fellow to have some ‘go’ in him.”

“You didn’t dance with Jimmie Ray at all, did you?” asked Louise.

“Only once. He’s too serious. I want to have some fun first. He’s serious. I told him the other day he was too serious. Oh, Louise, I could never think of getting married till I had a good, long fling.”

“There’s no doubt Jimmie’s after marrying you,” said Louise thoughtfully.

“Well, he’ll have a long wait. If he’s fond enough of me he won’t mind waiting.”

She rose and began to undress before the mirror, turning round, and looking at herself with approval—at her arching eyebrows, smooth forehead, silky, black hair brushed back wavily, long, irregular nose, curving lips, cheeks red as claret, rounded shoulders. She seemed more interested in her form than her face to-night.

“Men like ankles,” she announced to Louise, abruptly.

“Ssh!” cautioned her sister. “Don’t talk so loud. It’s a wee house. I hear Tom moving still, too.”

“Oh, Tom! He’s a sumph!”

“Tom is all right,” said Louise. “He got you to the dance to-night.”

“I know. Well, so he should. Besides, he won’t hear—he’s shaving because he’s afraid he won’t have time in the morning. Go on, Louise—get over, and let me into bed.”

“You haven’t dabbed your face with the cold-cream yet,” Louise remarked, edging over on the coverlet.

“Och, I can’t be bothered to-night. The dance is over—I’ve nothing doing to-morrow. Jimmie will maybe look in, but that doesn’t matter. My skin’s all right. Go on, get over.”

“Don’t! You’re tickling me!” Louise screamed.

She rolled off the bed, laughing, and began to undress, while Ellen slipped into the envelope of the turned-down sheets, and, sitting up, began to take the hairpins from her hair and toss them on the little, shaky, bamboo table that stood by the side of that “fine piece of furniture” that was part of a legacy to Mrs. Adair from a dead brother.

“Buck up, Louise, and come to bed. I’m sleepy, and I can’t go to sleep till you get in. I hope I’ve never to sleep alone—I couldn’t stand it. Pull the Venetian before you get in, so’s to keep the light out. I can see it’s a bit light already. No—the other side—that cord there—so’s to turn the slats looking down instead of up.”

Louise pulled the cord indicated, turning the blind; but she looked at it doubtfully.

“I think,” she said, slowly, considering aloud, “that anybody passing can see in when it’s like that.”

“Never mind. Anybody that would peep in would be prying, and so long as the light’s kept out that’s all that matters. It’s all right, I ’sure you. I’m sleepy.”

Louise turned out the light and slid in beside her sister.

“Did you turn out the light properly?” asked Ellen.

“Yes, of course.”

“You felt it?”

“Felt what?”

“Felt it against the thingummy—you know—the catch.”

“Yes, yes. You’re nervous after your dance.”

“I wouldn’t like to be what you call it—ass—assfixated.”

She was often tortured by a nervous dread of some such end, a dread that had, perhaps, its origin in the announcement a friend had once made to her that doctors sometimes, in hospitals, put out of existence, by suffocation, patients suffering from horrible and incurable disease. When highly strung, the dread of such an end seemed to her like a premonition.

“I—turned—it—out—all—right,” said Louise. “Go to sleep.”

CHAPTER II

IT was Saturday, a day that had seemed most painfully far distant on Monday, had been only a day nearer on Tuesday (Wednesday was like a half-way caravanseraï), had been drawing reasonably nearer on Thursday, by Thursday night was “the day after to-morrow,” and as for Friday—Friday was a day so joyful, in expectation of Saturday, that an impassive observer of man’s life might be allowed to conjecture that Friday was, if the girls’ longing hearts only knew it, more precious to them. When Saturday came it was frittered away as in the twinkling of an eye.

Tom carried his golf-clubs to business with him, and, after the office closed, ate a Vienna steak at the Café, then leapt onto a Braid Hills car that bore him to the links, and returned to Crown Street from the opposite direction to that in which he had left in the morning, returning about tea-time, carrying his clubs under his arm, with a friend on either side, they also carrying their putters, cleekies, hookies, and all the rest of the implements that supplied them with conversation on top of the car going to and coming from the field of action.

Louise, as the music-shop in which she earned her livelihood closed earlier than the millinery emporiums, dallied on Saturday, did not come directly home up the Mound, across George IV Bridge, and through the Jaw Bone Walk (so called because of the jaw-bone of a whale which made an arch over its farther exit); she wandered round attractive corners, Maule’s corner and Jenner’s corner. Looking in a window between Hanover Street and the Café, she heard a “Hullo, Louise!” and turning from the luring laces saw Tom sprinting across Princes Street for his car.

“Hullo!” she called, and returned to her calm-faced scrutiny of the many bargains. She entered and bought a pair of gloves. She had a mania for new gloves. She liked to feel that she wore new gloves and new shoes, liked the first for the clinging constriction of the kid, the latter for the unworn heels, and, by instinct, always chose those with dark soles. Ellen’s hats must feel new, but as often as not she bought shoes with staring, white soles that twinkled as she walked.

There were other differences between the sisters. For example, when hair had to be shampooed, Louise shampooed upon a Thursday evening, so that there would be all Friday for her hair to fall together again, and thus on

Saturday evening, "at home" evening, hairpins would not be showering out all over the room, and young men bumping heads together needlessly in their recovery. Ellen chose Friday night because of a certain wildness that falling pins give to the hair. She liked to be told by insurance clerks, bank clerks, or architects' clerks that her hair was coming down, and to seek the falling tresses before them, patting her head, crying: "Where—where is it? I can't feel it. Oh, it is *such* a nuisance—this hair is." And if the young man who assisted at the re-coiffing were not a "sumph," but "game," you could tell the measure of charm he had put into the operation by whether she said "Thank you very much" dryly, or slapped his cheek and said "Don't be silly!"

To-day Louise bought a pair of new gloves, and coming onto Princes Street again, but still feeling inclined to spend, wondered what else she might purchase. Happy thought! She sailed into a chemist's and bought a shampoo-powder—which would keep till Thursday. Then she walked leisurely home up the Mound.

Ellen did not stir out on Saturday mornings, but kept her front hair in curlers till noon, when she washed and dressed and looked at herself in profile with the aid of the dressing-table mirror and the silver-backed hand-glass that had been given to her on her last birthday by Jimmie Ray. After two good hours of this employment, the rat-tat of Louise's knuckles on the glass door brought a cry from Mrs. Adair:

"Are you ready to open the door, Ellen? I can't leave this pot."

The girls had lunch together in the kitchen, and when they had finished, Mr. Adair arrived, he having put up the shutters at the Painters, Decorators, and Paper-Hangers where he was head porter, felt each shutter a final time with the flat of his weak hand, shaken the iron gate thrice, and left the keys at the proprietor's house, where he would call for them on Monday.

Children in Edinburgh, when their father's labors are of this order, are wont to mention casually that "father is manager of Messrs. So-and-So, the Decorators." Sometimes they even hint that he has shares in the business. The fathers succumb, as a rule. Mr. Adair was no exception. He looked a broken man as he came into the kitchen. It was allowed him to eat lunch, on Saturdays, in his shirt-sleeves—a kind of acknowledgment that he was head of the house, and that if he had made no great affair of his life, he had perhaps done his best; and here was Saturday, the week's work done, the grocer's, fishmonger's, and butcher's bills paid—for he received his wages weekly, on the Friday night—his two daughters looking like "ladies" (thanks to their mother), and his son in an insurance office (thanks to his mother).

After lunch, the old man shaved and “changed himself,” as he persisted in calling what his wife assured him he should call “changed my clothes,” if he hoped for his daughters to be well-married. He changed into a blue serge lounge-suit, out of the old gray, and put on a clean dicky, for a white shirt he abhorred. His wife always, if she observed that some visitor had seen the deception, turned the conversation onto rheumatism, from which she averred her husband suffered; and when he denied, drawling and puzzled, she shook her head at him, clapped the back of his hand, and looked a most loving wife as she explained: “He can’t wear a white shirt because of it. He must always have flannels.” And then, laughing, in a hushed voice she would add behind her hand: “He wears a dicky!” Now he went off to “change himself” and don the clean dicky that he knew would be ready for him.

While Mr. Adair was dressing, Louise and Ellen hastened away to listen to the band in Princes Street Gardens, swinging along together, arm in arm, with clean petticoats showing a flick of white as they danced off a curbstone at a crossing, heart-free, aware that there were no holes in their stockings. They swung across the Meadows, past the lugubrious gables of the Infirmary, and, radiating what Mrs. Adair fondly called health and youth, came daintily treading down the Mound, Ellen very much aware of how the steepness of that descent gave them a kind of throned supremacy in the eyes of young men coming upward. Entering the Gardens, and drawing near to the center of the throng that the band attracted in the hollow, the girls walked nonchalantly by the seats where young men sat, each one toying with a walking-stick or whanghee-cane.

Louise, seeing on one of these seats a friend of her brother, bowed very stately. Ellen rolled her eyes. It was a puzzling partnership to the onlookers. They strolled on, these fair maidens, the bashfulness which they had felt on the edge of the throng, drawing near it and anxious for admiration, anxious to be observed, being gone, by then.

Up in Princes Street, whither they raised their eyes as they walked, their heads gently swaying like poppy-heads in the gentlest wind, the cable-cars crawled along. Beyond the high railings, people came and went, like beads being run left and right on a string by a kindergarten mistress instructing her charges in simple arithmetic. Down here, in the hollow, a gentle stir kept on around the bandstand, as when one turns a kaleidoscope slowly.

Round and round wandered Ellen and Louise, Louise’s hand held up daintily, the new gloves in evidence. Mothers of families, out with the families and “faither,” out for the afternoon, with the last one perhaps in a perambulator, perhaps not so far advanced, these stolid mothers looked at

the two parading girls with curiosity, stolid curiosity, watched them drawing nearer, looked at their backs as they passed.

Louise walked with a kind of shamed daring, Ellen with a blushing self-consciousness, her head up so that the end of her nose showed the little lump very clearly. Someone coughed, a violent cough, and her eyelids drooped and fluttered as she peeped under them in the direction of the sound, to make sure whether this was a young man's cough intended to attract her attention, or the unassuming cough of perhaps some pensioned-off soldier, finishing his days as light porter in a Princes Street shop, now stealing a quarter of an hour to listen to the band of his old regiment—coughing out of the depths of his abdomen over a cutty-pipe and rank tobacco, under one of the rhododendron-bushes.

In and out, round the pin-point of a bandstand in Princes Street Gardens, went the little crowd of people—while the world spun on, and the light chased the darkness round it, and steamers smoked round its massive blue-and-purple sides, rolling down to Rio, or shrieked their sirens in fog and darkness off the Banks, while Pueblo Indians, in Taos, went bedward up their ladders, and, in Arabia, Arabs were awakening. Out and in, round this pin-point, heads up buoyant, athrill with health and youth, as Mrs. Adair saw them, went Louise and Ellen, unaware of how little they knew, because they had not touched even the garment-hem of Knowledge; both contented as they were, always in a position to give the date of the month to any student who, submerged in questions involving æons, might have forgotten it.

Now they drew near a little circle of young men on the grass, and Louise's face showed the faintest frown, while Ellen blushed. They were like two partners in business, the one balancing the other, to the puzzlement of outsiders. The young men's heads went up as they came nearer. Ellen blushed deeper, her eyelids drooping more demurely, the long lashes showing; but the throat-clearing of the young men was held in abeyance because of Louise's increasing stateliness. Only when the girls had passed, did they know that they might make the various sounds that had been held in reserve.

“Oh, my!”

“A-hum!”

“Shut up!”

Then out of the crowd stepped a young man, bowed, and raised his hat. The girls smiled sweetly upon him, the stateliness of Louise again balancing Ellen's excitement at the meeting.

“How *are* you?” said the young man.

"Very well, thank you," from Louise.

"You're a stranger," from Ellen.

"Yes, we haven't seen you for some time," said Louise. "Tom mentioned you the other day. We wondered how you were getting on."

"I've been busy," the young man replied.

"You look it," Ellen exclaimed.

"Honest! I have."

"Yes—I expect so," said Ellen.

"I have! I've been studying."

"For a degree?"

Peals of laughter from all three.

"Shall we walk round?" he asked.

"I don't mind"—"I don't mind," the girls duetted.

"You are fond of music, aren't you?" he interrogated further.

"Oh, passionately," said Ellen.

"Same here. Let me come in between you. It's more *au fait*."

"Oh, fie!" giggled Ellen.

"You're clever, Miss Ellen."

"So I've been told before! I like that thing they are playing now. Do you know what it is?"

"No, it is new to me."

And so forth, thrice round the bandstand, till, this conversational youth boring them, they bowed to an acquaintance who had been eying them on the last two rounds.

"Please excuse us—there's an old friend," said Louise. Graciously she gave her hand. "Good-by. So glad to have seen you."

He took her hand and bowed, then held his hand to Ellen.

"Toodooloo!" said she, head on side, drifting away from him and leaving him in a flutter.

He returned to his fellows, who greeted him with coughs and groans. He managed to squeeze in somewhere in the row that rattled sticks and canes and drew designs on the gravel, and announced:

"The younger one is hot stuff, I think."

The row whooped at him, and elderly couples, sitting back from the benches on little, movable, iron chairs, looked at the young men and smiled benignly, or banefully, as they were moved, upon the noisiness of youth. The

leader of the band tap-tap-tapped and raised his red arm with the baton. Out broke the strains of *Il Trovatore*.

“There they go,” said a youth.

“Who?”

“Hot Stuff and her sister,” replied the chaffer, promptly.

“Why don’t you go with them?” another asked the young man who had expressed his opinion of Ellen so, and made a swipe at his hat with a twiddly cane.

Louise and Ellen wandered away, a very tall young man between them, he bending now over one, now over the other. They were both laughing gayly at his witticisms, or perhaps it was at his glances down into their eyes; for what he was saying, as he held open the gate for them at the foot of the Mound, was: “Are you fond of strawberries? I’m awfully fond of strawberries.”

“Oh, go on, silly,” said Ellen, laughing with delight.

The charmer fell in step between them again, holding his cane behind his back and striding, slow and stooping, tapping his heels with the cane’s end.

“Been to any dawnces recently?” he asked.

“You’ve been eating London buns,” said Ellen.

“Ellen!” cried out Louise. “You are cheeky.”

“So I have been told before,” said Ellen; and so they went up the Mound, crossed High Street (where a drunken woman, barefooted, shawled, jeered at them: ‘Oho! The would-be toffs!’) and passed along George IV Bridge, where two students, coming cityward, noted that Ellen seemed more interested in them than in their convoy, and commented: “What a damn fool that fellow looks.”

The fool went on with the two, Ellen enjoying herself more and more under the ardent glances that she received from this young man, she blushing warmly, aware that as she walked he peered all the while at her face with a most persistent intentness. Louise, at last, began to scrutinize him with something of contumely. But he was attractive at Crown Street because he could sing better than any man who lived in, or came to call at, any other “front-door house” or “close-door house” within earshot.

As they drew near home, from the other direction Tom advanced, heavy with golf-clubs, accompanied by two golfing friends, lolling young men, unburdened by humility or reserve; well-dressed young men; well-bred young men, in Crown Street; good dancers, talking with similarity, talking in the confident and ordained voice of their class. When low shoes were the

vogue, their shoes were low; when high shoes were the vogue, their shoes were high. If you met one of them and noted that he wore trousers like balloons, you knew that you would see fifty more pairs of balloons on fifty other young men like him. If you met one of them with tight, constricting trousers on his legs, you would not be surprised, turning the corner, to meet another young man wearing trousers little short of anatomical. They carried walking-sticks on all days save Sunday; then they did not, because on that day young men who tried to imitate them carried walking-sticks—and they must distinguish themselves somehow.

Even Mrs. Adair, who prided herself on the possession of a musical ear, could not tell one of these visiting young men from fifty others merely by the voice outside; in vain to strain her ears in the bedroom, as she rubbed the powder on her face and wiped it off preparatory to making her appearance for the evening, in the hope of telling which of them had arrived. But the main sign of breeding in them was the capacity they all shared to lift their caps with their left hands while they extended their right in greeting, hugging golf-clubs under their right arms with infinite ease. Mrs. Adair's brothers had known no such deportment. She trusted, before she passed away, to see both her daughters married to men of this pattern.

Louise shook hands in dignified fashion with Tom's two friends; Ellen, flushed, shook hands, and, feeling warm pressures, wriggled her head. There all stood talking and laughing, till Mrs. Adair, coming to the window to arrange the curtains, saw them, hastened to the front door, and, standing in the little porch, spreading her skirts, called:

"Now, you young people!"

Doffing of hats—salutations. Two more friends arrived. More doffing, more handshakes.

"Come in," said Mrs. Adair. "Don't hold your meetings in the street. Come in. Tea is nearly ready."

One thanked her warmly, but regretted other engagements. Another said he was on his way home, but would be delighted to come in later.

"Do. Delighted!" called Mrs. Adair. "Come away, you young people."

Adieux blent with laughter. There was more cap-lifting, bowing. At the little gate, the tall singer made a great pose, with legs crossed, one hand on hip, another holding the gate open.

"After you," said Ellen.

"Aw! Pray, precede me."

"Age before——"

"Go on!"

From up the street came the tap of other walking-sticks; other voices added to the clamor that passed into the congested corridor, where Mrs. Adair, exquisitely pompadoured, laughed her welcomes, and pushed the young men, in the sweetest matronly fashion, into the drawing-room.

In the kitchen, Mr. Adair sat over the *Dispatch*, still in his shirt-sleeves, the blue serge jacket hanging on a hook behind the door. He rose and donned the jacket with regret, for the Saturday evening happiness was about to begin; but he delayed his entrance into the front room as long as possible. These gatherings of young people made him nervous. They belonged to the class whose members he was accustomed to address as “Sir,” and “Madam”; and he had to adopt a new manner to them here. His wife—a woman in whose cleverness and capability he had an immense and unwavering belief—had elevated him into a sphere that was not his, and he had to show himself as “father” sometimes—a respectable, self-made man: though what he had made he hardly knew, only he knew that this was the attitude expected of him. He, being a negative person, could fill the position by saying little.

He waited till “mother,” aided by Louise, had buttered and cut the bread, and set the slices neatly on doily-covered plates; had put the little cakes—“two-bites-to-a-cherry cakes,” he called them—on another doily-covered plate; had heaped up the cookies, had infused the tea, as his wife always told him he should phrase what in his boyhood’s home had been called “masking the tea.” When Mrs. Adair said, “Now, come along, father,” he followed her, *Dispatch* in hand, walked into the laughter-filled room, where one of the visitors was admiring Ellen’s belt and studying the buckle, having the obvious mechanism of its clasp explained to him, and another was hitting him on the head with a sofa-cushion for being a dense idiot. In the doorway Mr. Adair beamed, nodded, curtsied all round.

“There’s a good joke in the ‘Notes and Co-ments’ ” he said. “I’ll read it to you. It’s a play upon words.”

As he read the jest, the girls and Mrs. Adair shepherded, with gestures, beckoning and pointing, all the young men into seats round the table. They applauded the witticism they had thus been diverted with, and Mr. Adair, wholly satisfied, took his seat at the head of the table, looked round pleasantly on the party, or the plates of the party, and at the little phalanx of teacups set before his wife, the cosy-covered electroplate teapot, on its tile, by her hand.

“Everybody got elbow-room?” he asked.

Thereafter he had no duties to perform except to cut the cake, when told to. On the principle that young folk will be young folk, he extricated himself

from the center of things when tea was over; the table was then pushed into a corner, and he sought another. One of the visitors sat down beside him to talk politics, or listen to an exposition on the different ways of sizing walls; but Mr. Adair was not allowed to advance far in that unwritten, technical essay. His wife, knowing his weakness for talking of size and paint, and for explaining, as if to show his authority for dogmatic opinion, that in his young days he was a house-painter, lured his listener away to play cards in another corner. Then old Adair, finding himself alone, rose and felt in his pockets.

“Anything I can get for you, father?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“No, no; I’ll get it all right.”

Still fumbling in his pockets, with an air that suggested that what he sought was really in his pockets after all, if he could only extricate it, he wandered doorward, wandered out of the room. But he had lost nothing. In the corridor he was at ease; and going into the kitchen, he turned up the gas, took off his coat, and lit his pipe.

Later on, he opened the door to admit Jimmie Ray, whose knocks and rings had not been heard in the front room, because of the unanimous singing in the front room by the whist-players (terrible shock though this may be to whist experts) and the cigarette-smoking young men. Earlier in the evening, Mrs. Adair had said: “Now, don’t stand on ceremony. If you want to smoke—here are matches.” And Ellen had set an ash-tray beside her partner with the sweetest gesture imaginable, and had lifted his cigarette, that he left in abeyance while selecting a card, taken one little puff at it, and put her foot on top of his, under the table, for a charming moment.

“Oh, it’s you, Jimmie,” said Mr. Adair, in his broadest voice. “Come in. It’s a fine nicht. Take off your overcoat. Aye, see—give it to me—let me hang it up. Aye, just go in, James. No, no—Ah’m coming in later. Ah’ve something to do at the back. Ah’m looking for something.”

CHAPTER III

LOUISE was a contralto, Ellen a soprano. They sang in the church-choir, for though Mr. Adair had attended a Wesleyan chapel in his youth, he had been transplanted hither by his wife. He had met her at the Wesleyan chapel, and had a tender regard for it, its big brass gasoliers, and coarse varnish, and simple reading-desk, that not the most ambitious, who called corridors “halls” and parlors “drawing-rooms,” could ever call a lectern. But his wife found it small, constricting, not offering sufficient scope for her endeavors. The girls, with such voices, deserved something better; and besides, when one had a front-door house in Crown Street, one had to live up to it. It was only fair to give the girls a chance. Mrs. Adair, if she might mention herself, had deserved a better chance in life. She would see to it that her girls received what, though it had been denied her, should have been hers.

“There’s no doubt you’re a grand woman,” said Mr. Adair. “But ye don’t mean that you regret meeting me at the Wesleyan hall, do ye, wife?”

“Oh, father, father! Why, my lad, I wouldn’t change you for all the men in the world, if every hair of their heads was hung with diamonds. It’s the young people I’m thinking of.”

“Oh, well, that’s all right. They’re in your hands, Eliza.”

The girls would have a fair chance. Tom was having his, indentured to an insurance firm, sure of periodical increases of salary, and, at old age—if he remained sober, which rested with him—a pension. The girls must have dances, parties, churches, of the best procurable. And Tom’s friends, met in his sphere, must also be sifted for them. The whole thing should be overseen as if it were a business, and one department help another. Ellen and Louise should have every opportunity. Thus, in the season, Mrs. Adair took them to the Carnival at Waverley Market, but inculcated in them a sense of distrust of the hobby-horses. She was glad to see that, by instinct, Louise would have naught to do with them. Ellen, too, when her mother pointed out how many brazen girls, girls of loose, vulgar manners, rode on the hobby-horses, eyed them with contempt; but seeing how, as they undulated round, they were observed by many eyes, she thought (without expressing the thought) that she would like to have one or two turns one day—just for fun.

Still, even at church, she extracted a bit of sport out of life. The contraltos sat to left, the sopranos to right, in the choir-seats, and every Sunday, at two minutes to eleven, and twenty-eight minutes past six, there occurred what was become a kind of feature of the services. Up the aisle, to left, appeared Louise, up that to right appeared Ellen, and in perfect step they advanced the length of the church, in their Sunday tailor-made costumes. Mrs. Adair had saved many an overtime shilling of her husband's overtime to pay for Ellen's suits; and it was something for an ex-house-painter, entering the fourth quarter of his life, to see his two daughters in the choir; it was something for his wife to see them advance upon the choir. They became part of the ritual and helped to transform it into a performance.

Just as they were seated, the beadle brought in the Bible, mounted the pulpit steps, put the Sacred Book in place, descended, opened the vestry door, and held it while the minister came forth, stood back till he had passed, and then followed him, a respectful distance to rear, slowly up the steps, closed the pulpit door after him, and descended again—in the eyes of the worshipers a menial, but, according to the Book he had carried up, none so paltry a person. As the Book says: "Neither be ye called master, for one is your master, even Jesus Christ; but he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Mr. and Mrs. Adair were always seated five minutes before the girls arrived. They were seated comfortably, had bowed to the elders in the vestibule, smiled at and shaken hands with other worshipers, who had arrived simultaneously at this common center.

As for the tenor who sat beside Ellen—she thought him most absurdly conceited. True, he could sing tenor. There was a poignancy in his high notes like the desire of the moth for the star; but he was conceited. To-day, when he handed her, covertly, a bag of peppermint balls, held in the palm of his hand, she fumbled long, being in a frisky mood, feeling in the bag with thumb and two fingers, and turning her head to smile in his eyes. There was but a dim light in the church, and the curtains that hung round the choir had been pulled close when the first half of the service was over. She fancied nobody could see.

"You'd better take one instead of tickling my hand," the tenor murmured.

"I'm astonished at you," Ellen whispered. "I'm not tickling your hand."

She extracted a sticky ball and popped it into her mouth surreptitiously, because she noticed that a few worshipers were visible in one direction, where the curtain did not fully intervene, dim and mysterious certainly, and in shadow, but perhaps they could see her better than she saw them.

“You did tickle me. I believe you did it on purpose. Give me your hand and I’ll show you what you did.”

“Well, you are awful!” she said.

“Go on,” said he.

Her refusal to comply seemed so stubborn, that he desisted. Then, when he believed her impervious, something touched him, and he looked down. Ellen’s hand had stolen over his. He clutched it, and she tittered slightly. Above their heads, the minister’s voice rolled over the congregation, as the sonorous ocean rolls over the hard, close-packed sands of the beaches: “. . . more sense of the dignity of our lives, more sense of being the tabernacles of the Holy Spirit, more. . . .”

“You’re tickling!” whispered Ellen.

“I’m showing you,” explained the tenor.

At this juncture, neither knew how, the bag broke. Out fell the lollipops, ran upon the floor, resounded with a succession of falls and rolls; and all the choir giggled. Overhead, the minister’s voice paused. Was it that he was heart-broken, or was it to give rhetorical value to his conclusion that he paused? At any rate, his sonorous and pleading voice ceased, and the church was hushed as a mausoleum. Even the tittering of the choir stopped. The hum of the sermon’s last phrases died away in the high, fretted rafters; and then came the preacher’s voice again, summing up:

“And so I end with the words of my text: ‘The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are *not* saved.’ ”

He sat down. Was he going to pray now, or would he announce the hymn-number? The choir listened intently, waiting for his voice—for either “Let us pray . . .” or “Hymn Number. . . .” There was so long a silence, that they grew fearful. The tall feathers in the hats trembled, the artificial poppies wavered. The male singers grasped their knees, or shot their linen. There was a feeling of tensiity down there in the curtained and secret choir, and Ellen began to enjoy that tensiity. The minister’s voice gave out the hymn. The hymn-book pages rustled. The organ began, ravishingly, slowly, full of the *vox humana*; a subtle and seductive emotion came to Ellen. The choir rose to its feet; there was a sighing of silk and satin, and the subdued, brief tramp of people rising, preluding the soaring voices: “O Love that wilt not let me go. . . .”

As Ellen sang, raising her head, she met the eyes of Jimmie Ray, he who was serious, he who gave her the birthday-gift of the chased, silver-backed hand-glass, the Christmas gift of the silver-stoppered scent-bottle. She looked at him, singing these words, and he felt a lump in his throat, was

aware of a catch at his heart, a trembling, it is even possible, in his veins. For Ellen sang to him, across the church, sang with a face that to all others was expressionless; but her eyes lured him so that he thought everybody must know that he was spellbound, thought everybody must know that this hymn of divine love was to him a song of human devotion.

But the wise Ellen knew that nobody would observe anything; the world, like the church, was full of people made to be fooled, desirous to be fooled. Creeds and philosophies and all knowledge were vanity and folly before the lure of one pink-cheeked lass in a large hat. Yet when the hymn was over, and the minister was closing the service with a short, broken prayer, the tenor whispered, slightly turning his head, peeping under lowered brows: "Keep your eyes off him. I see what you are up to."

"What do you mean?" Ellen asked, demurely. Overhead, the voice ended: ". . . and may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds." It was a phrase that Ellen thought always was a proof of how vulgar even a minister could be. "Keep your heart and mine's." A preacher should know better than that! "Mine" was the possessive; "mine's" was vulgar.

"I saw you," said the tenor. "You're a fascinator, all right, Miss Ellen."

"I don't know what you mean," Ellen replied, wiping the gloved fingers that the lollipops had made sticky. "I was only thinking of the hymn. I love that hymn."

She turned her head and looked him in the eyes so directly, while he groped for his hat, and, finding it, still meeting her gaze, ran his right sleeve round it to restore the sheen, looked so frankly, that he believed her. She saw that he believed her. So she rose, and when he held up her coat, saying, "Allow me," very coldly she responded: "Thank you, I can manage myself."

Turning abruptly, she walked down into the aisle, with elation; feeling she was learning things of real value in the world. As she walked so, making up on the last worshipers, she was aware that the tenor was close on her heels. She hastened her steps, treading stiffly, as one offended. Her father and mother crawled slowly in the rear of the little, elbowing dozen that trickled into the vestibule; they walked, half turned, delaying for her coming.

The young man hurried and made up on Ellen before she upon her kin.

"I must beg your pardon," said he, bending toward her.

She looked at the coat on his arm, the silk hat in his hand. She thought that indeed he was a fool. With drooping eyes she considered the hat and coat; then looked upward.

"Very well," she said, looking by now at his pretty chin, for he was a pretty boy. "Very well," she said. "It's granted. But try," she added, "to be a gentleman."

"Here you are!" cried her mother. And as they came out of the vestibule, that wise lady remarked: "It was a queer look you gave that young man."

"I think he needs it," said Ellen.

"Aye, aye," agreed Mr. Adair. "Ellen can look after herself. He's a conceited young lad, yon. There he goes. He's got a grand voice, though. Ye often notice singers have little brains."

"Ah! Here's Louise," said Mrs. Adair. And the united family passed down the broad front steps into the street, where stood others, lingering in twos and threes, shaking hands, being gracious each to each, all dressed in their best.

It was a cold morning. The paving-stones, if clean, were cheerless; the sky, seen between the dark gray of the houses, was of a slaty and lugubrious hue. But a sharpness in the air atoned for these possibly depressing influences, and smoke mounting up from the roofs in many pillars gave a sense of homes, firesides, sanctuary, out of the somewhat bleak city streets. Scattered, bare trees in the gardens, soaring up over dark bushes, looked as if they shivered. Sparrows chirped piercingly in every strip of deserted street, corner of dead square, deserted mews. On the many cornices of the old houses, pigeons, a shade more joyful in color—gray-blue—than the corniced, blue-gray buildings, tucked their beaks in puffed breasts and ruffled their feathers. Were it just a little colder, one might expect snow. It was a day for walking smartly beyond the city, on hard roads, or for loafing in loose attire in a warm study, or for sitting on a beaded hassock upon some deep rug before a glowing drawing-room fire.

Ellen and Louise walked ahead of their parents, presenting a picture, in the latter's eyes, of Sabbath propriety. As they went, demurely, with feet treading soft as falling leaves, Ellen found opportunity to tell her sister the story of the peppermint balls, about which Louise wanted to be informed, and of the tenor's fall—chiefly the tenor's fall.

Tom opened the door for them, standing back behind it; for he was not presentably dressed, had been employing the morning in putting an edge on two razors, was collarless, cuffless, unshaven.

"Hullo, girls!" he said.

"Nice one, you are," jeered Ellen. "Why weren't you at church?"

"What was the text?" asked Tom.

"Don't know."

“Huh!” said her brother. “Fat lot of good church does you.”

“We’re not slopping about at home in old togs, anyhow.”

“No,” agreed Tom, slouching to his box of a room, to put his oily strop away, “showing off your new ones. I know all about it.”

“You know nothing about it, nothing at all,” replied Ellen, swaggering to the bedroom, where Louise, having thrown her hat on the bed, was combing up her hair before the dressing-table looking-glass. “You’ve only been told; merely hearsay. You’re awful young, young fellah, my lad.”

“Ellen, Ellen! Be a lady!” expostulated Louise.

“Open the door,” came Tom’s voice. “There’s father and mother knocking.”

Louise ran off to open the door; Ellen sat down, and drawing her skirts over her knees began to unbutton her shoes, watching her actions in the long wardrobe-mirror.

CHAPTER IV

SUNDAY evening gatherings at the front-door house in Crown Street were different from the Saturday ones. One of the girls often stayed at home, leaving the choir minus a contralto or soprano—according to which it was who elected, on summer evenings, to “have a stroll on the Braids,” or, on winter evenings, to keep the fire company in the drawing-room.

The Sunday visitors were quieter than those of Saturday. Sunday was the day when Mrs. Adair was less of the matronly hostess than the affable mother to the strangers within the gates. This specific Sabbath evening she brought home, as it were under her wing, a heavy, spectacled young man, who had come to Edinburgh to study divinity, and was making a fitting beginning by attending a place of worship. He was one of those slow characters who seem, if not to crave and invite sympathy, to be in need of it. They mislead the kindly matron who desires to “mother” them. Opening wide eyes, magnified by spectacle-lenses, they listen stolidly; stolidly they depart and leave the matron doubtful what to think of them.

Jimmie Ray walked home with Louise; the young man—Snodgrass—with Mrs. Adair, a few yards behind. Mr. Adair and Ellen had absented themselves from evening service.

The air of half-gentle, half-stolid melancholy was around this young man, Jimmie Ray. His native soil was propitious for the growth of amaranthus. His father (with whom he lived alone in a small house in Wardie) led an odd, absent-minded life, winning the gentleness of others by his own gentle voice. He smiled sweetly on the world out of the niche in which he lived a retired life. His wife had died in giving birth to a child, when Jimmie was seven years of age. The child and the mother had been buried together; and thereafter the father had been subdued—with the air of a man who blamed himself for something, and desired to give nobody pain of any kind. He attended to his shop, and collected a little library of books on heraldry—his pet subject; and, apart from his business calls, he went hardly anywhere, saw hardly anybody. His only exercise was found in occasional rambles round the city on Saturday afternoons—perhaps he would take train to Balerno, whence he would return by the right-of-way over the Pentlands to Glencorse, thence to Colinton, then by train to Edinburgh again; or he might pick his way through Wardie to Granton, walk

up by the side of the estuary to Cramond, eat a sandwich and sip a small whisky-and-soda there, and come back to town from Barnton Station on the Queensferry Road, physically refreshed by the outing, but as subdued as ever, as if the faint odor of rotting leaves in the woods around Cramond had made him talk to himself of “graves, of worms, and epitaphs.” In the evening he pored over one of the volumes of Fairbairn on *Crests*.

On the first Sunday of each month, he donned a silk hat with a crêpe band around it, and went out to Morningside Cemetery, picked his way along paths with well-kept borders, to one green mound among the many, looked at a wreath that lay there under a glass cover, said “Aye—uh-huh!” to himself, and then came home again to cold roast and pickled beet-root. While thus cherishing his melancholy, he dreaded any too acute reminders of the cause of it. He could never bear the taste of almond flavoring in the rice-pudding that followed, for almond flavoring was associated with the happiest of the many happy days he had known with his wife; and a certain kind of rippling laughter, if ever he heard such, coming and going, made him hasten his steps, jerking his head down as he did so, as if somebody had smitten him from behind.

There was, on the wall, a daguerreotype of Mrs. Ray—a mere chit of a thing, very tiny and slender; it gave Jimmie an idea of his mother quite different from his own memory. She was to him a sentimentality, a pensive memory of the smell of a print gown, and soft hands rumpling his hair. He used sometimes to look at the daguerreotype with an expression that some might call mawkish. With his father, over the breakfast-roll, each speaking slow, and with long pauses between the sentences, he used to discuss politics (national and municipal), the work to be done at the shop, orders for repairing, clocks left to be overhauled, the style that should be adopted in engraving some silver trophy, and so forth, each speaking to the other with an air of deferring—the father to the son as an individual, the son to the father as head of the business and his elder. An old servant took Mr. Ray’s tentative orders and attended to them, if she thought them sensible, sometimes carrying them out with failure, which he ignored, sometimes with original improvement, which he commented on with: “I see, Annie, you’ve done so-and-so very nicely indeed. Ye have tae be congratulated.”

Most people saw a marked resemblance to the father in the slow, gentle-eyed son. He was head over ears infatuated with Ellen Adair, who delighted in his faithful affection, his comically diffident advances. Louise, when alone with Jimmie, was never eager to be engaging. He might have been her brother-in-law already, to judge by the way she treated him. She made no attempt to see how far he would go; perhaps she knew he would not “go” at

all. It might even be suspected, at such times, that she was on the verge of being sorry for him. When he asked, meeting them at the church-door, "How's Ellen to-night?" she replied:

"Oh, Ellen's fine. She is staying in."

"She has not got a cold, has she?" he inquired, anxiously.

"No, no; she's just staying in. I suppose you are busy just now?"

"Yes—Christmas coming near," he said.

"You'll be keeping the shop open later?"

"Not yet. But we're never away from the shop ourselves early. You see, there's new stock for Christmas and New Year's gifts coming in every day, and that gives us plenty to do after shopping-time."

"I saw a light in the wee wicket in your door the other night," said Louise.

"But that's just for the policeman to see in," Jimmie explained, plodding along heavily, his umbrella hanging from the rigidly bent left arm. "There's a light left on all night. What night was it?"

"Tuesday."

"We were late on Tuesday. What time did you pass?"

"Eleven."

"I don't think we were away by eleven on Tuesday. Was El—were you alone?"

"No, Tom was with me. We had been down to Pilrig to see some friends."

A few steps to rear Mrs. Adair was talking in much the same manner to Mr. Snodgrass. This was the kind of way she always talked on Sunday evenings, taking an interest, it seemed, in the lives of her young men. Was it, one pauses to ask, that the mothering-note was in the air then? In response to that it is worth noting that Louise treated Jimmie like this every day of the week, if she chanced to meet him; chatted to him about his shop, even asking him where and how this or that article was made. To-night she talked on dish-covers, asked how long a good watch lasted, and if the shop had ever been broken into. She was immensely interested when Jimmie told her of various precautions against burglary and theft. When he mentioned how every day he walked along the counter's outer side, running his fingers under its beveled edge——

"What's that for?" she asked.

"Because," he explained, "one trick of jeweler's shop sneaks is to come in on some errand or another and affix a piece of putty under the edge of the

counter. If they are looking over trays of rings, or charms, or small articles, they try to appropriate something and stick it on the putty."

"But why don't they carry it off with them?" asked Louise.

"Because they might be followed at once. A confederate will come in as soon as the first thief has gone—that is, if he gives his confederate the signal. This confederate will then walk along the counter, while talking, and take the stolen article off. Even if the thing is missed a minute later, the search for it is complicated that way. One has to be careful about false accusations."

She asked for other such tales, and was told by Jimmie, who was interested in all phases of his work and life, of the passing of the cracksman with the jemmy, and the coming of the scientific cracksman with his nitroglycerine, oxygen, acetylene gas, and blowpipe.

"It is brain-power, not brute-power, that a cracksman needs nowadays," he said.

"It is a wonder that a man able to do such things doesn't turn his talents to better use," Louise remarked, platitudinizing, if you will—but interested.

It is strange that Ellen, who was bored at the very beginnings of any such talk, who always called out "Talking shop!" and, jumping to the piano-stool, plunged into a vamping of some popular tune, or led off to cards, or cushion-throwing, or asking riddles—of all strange entertainments—odd that she should have been the one to stir Jimmie's pulses with what he esteemed the most ardent love the world had ever known. Even now, as he walked, with swinging umbrella, along the Jaw Bone Walk, by Louise's side, Jimmie Ray was longing to reach the Crown Street house and see Ellen's mottled, gray-blue, violet eyes, to rejoice in her vivacious movements, and to hear her mocking laugh.

And here they were, leaving the damp meadows, where the lamplight glistened on wet railings, and the ribbon of cement on which they walked showed black, although there was no rain. Here were the lights of home; here were the rows of front-doors, and flat-doors, behind the spear-headed railings, and soon Jimmie was looking in the laughing eyes of Ellen, pressing her hand warmly.

They gathered round the fire, instead of round the card-table, on Sundays. Mrs. Adair had followed Louise and Jimmie with her new protégé, and soon Mr. Adair was buttoning and unbuttoning his jacket before the stolid, magnified eyes of Mr. Snodgrass, saying: "Sit down. I'm pleased to welcome you. Aye, aye; so you're going to study for the ministry in Edinburgh."

There came a rat-tat at the door.

"Now who will this be?" said Mrs. Adair.

"I'll go," volunteered Louise.

Everybody gave ear—till Mrs. Adair, meeting the stony gaze of Mr. Snodgrass, suddenly bethought her of the utter vulgarity of such a proceeding, and began to say—she knew not what, something, anything, to cover this lapse of manners.

The new arrival was a dapper little fellow, blue-eyed, going prematurely bald. He had met Tom at the golf-club, come home with him once or twice, had his own impression of the Crown Street house and its inhabitants, and then gone off to London. As people in London cannot yet "drop in" on Sunday evenings at Edinburgh houses, whatever may be possible in that way fifty years hence, it would be difficult to say whether he had been appalled or attracted by the household. Mrs. Adair was glad he had arrived this evening, for she felt as if something really smart and capable—and gentlemanly—should be shown to this stolid, spectacled fellow whom she, true to her reputation, had brought home to supper.

"Hullo, Walter!" cried Tom. "Where have you sprung from?"

"How are you, Tom?" said the blue-eyed young man; and Ellen noted, preparing to rise to greet him, how very well-cut was his coat, how it fanned out elegantly from the waist.

"Well, well, Mr. Lane," said Mrs. Adair, taking the young man's extended hand in both of hers, such ways being the mode of this evening. "You're a stranger. Come north on holiday?"

"Aye, aye, of course," interrupted old Adair, before Walter Lane could explain whence he had come; and he shook hands warmly. "And how do you find London village?" This he spoke very affably and smiling, for Mr. Adair was rested by Sunday evening, more pleased to see young humanity crowding in; and besides, he had liked Walter Lane. "Here's Ellen—you remember Ellen?"

"Remember her well," said Lane.

Ellen, radiant and sprightly, ran her eyes up and down the neat figure before her.

"And this," Mr. Adair went on, "is Mr. Ray—a constant visitor on Sunday evenings," he added, because his wife had told him that his way of introducing baldly, thus: "Mr. Jones—Mr. Brown; Mr. Brown—Mr. Jones," was vulgar.

Ellen blushed; James shifted from left foot to right foot, so that even the old man noticed and thought him like "a hen on a hot griddle"; and the

dapper visitor sprang to conclusions.

"Excuse me," said Tom. "Allow me to introduce Mr. Snodfield. Mr. Lane, an old golf-club friend of mine—Mr. Snodfield."

"Grass," prompted Mrs. Adair.

"I beg your pardon," Tom apologized. "Mr. Grass."

"I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Snodgrass," said the alert Walter Lane; which might have made things go smoothly—but did not seem to.

Ellen laughed wildly; Tom stood lumpish, an inane grin on his features. Mr. Snodgrass, slowly turning his head, fixed Ellen with his octopuslike eyes; but somehow or other everybody found a seat, and Lane explained that he was north for a few days and thought he would just run in and see how Tom was getting on.

"And where are you living?" asked Mrs. Adair.

"With my people at Trinity."

"Trinity is a very nice locality."

"It's so nice and secluded, isn't it?" asked Louise.

"It's classy," said Ellen.

The divinity student, who, on seating himself, had fallen into an unblinking stare before him, turned his head slowly, so that he looked like an image in a waxworks, got Ellen in focus, looked at her stolidly, and then slowly again his head turned back to its old position. Louise saw a book under Lane's arm, and as the conversation appeared to be about to suffer another break——

"What is your book?" said she.

He held it out.

"Oh, I just took it from the shelves to read in the car coming up," said he. "It is one of Pater's."

There was a shriek of merriment from Ellen.

"Father!" she said. "I did not know you were an author."

The head of the divinity student again turned slowly, like the head of a wax image. Ellen saw it turning, and attempted to meet the expected stare, but the magnified stolidity of those orbs, with a pin-point of sparkle in the center of each, seemed too horrible. It was a relief when the head turned slowly back.

Louise took the proffered book.

"Let me see it," pleaded Ellen. "I'm passionately fond of reading."

Louise passed the book to her sister, who turned to the title-page.

“Well!” she ejaculated. “Fellow of Brazen Nose College!”

The head of the divinity student, for the third time—it seemed to move by clockwork, and be set to move at stated intervals—began to turn; then he apparently recollected himself, his head switched back, he sat down about two inches lower in his chair, and stared, without winking, at a large-patterned camellia on the ottoman.

“I think I would like this,” Ellen remarked.

“Have a loan of it, then,” said Lane.

“Is that the volume containing *The Child in the House*?” asked Jimmie Ray, who seemed to have been forgotten.

Everybody moved—Lane with vivacity.

“Yes, sir. Do you know it?” he said.

Mr. Adair, puzzled, looked from one to the other, wondering wherefore this enthusiasm, but pleased, as he had felt unpleasant in the earlier dragging conversation. Louise was interested in an unexpected facet of Jimmie not known before; Mrs. Adair sat an inch more erect, for obvious reasons; the divinity student sat forward, gathered himself together, turned as on a pivot, goggled at Jimmie, and said: “It is a great pleasure to meet a reader.”

Ellen tossed her head, flushing with triumph. She was glad now that her blundering father had suggested to the company that Jimmie was probably something to her; but she was not sorry when the gathering broke up. One thing she learned from the conversation, and that was that just as there were houses and houses, “front-door houses” and “houses up a close,” and some that took in lodgers, so there were books and books. There were books that carried a walking-stick on week-days; there were books that carried a walking-stick on Sundays only; there were books, she gathered from the talk, that were “stylish.”

But sitting upon the edge of her bed, looking over this book Tom’s old friend had left, she experienced a certain perturbation.

“I say, Louise,” she said, “it was pretty game of young Lane to offer me this book in that brazen way. Books and roses from a man—you know what that means.”

Louise looked at her thoughtfully.

“Oh, no,” she cried out, “that won’t do. It’s books he’s keen on. He’s so keen on the book that he didn’t know why you asked for it.”

“Well, *why* did I ask for it?” inquired Ellen, turning round. “To make Jimmie jealous?”

“No,” said Louise, sweet of voice. “Just to swank.”

“I hate men that read,” said Ellen. She turned over a few more pages. “I can’t make head or tail of this,” she declared. “Well, anyhow, Jimmie let old Goggles see that he wasn’t the only pebble on the beach. Och, I’ll never read this—I can’t read it.”

A great critic once wrote: “Utterly baffled in all my attempts to understand the ignorance of Plato, *I conclude myself ignorant of his understanding.*” But not thus Ellen.

“I can’t make out what it’s all about,” she objected, with annoyance; and then, tossing the book down, “I don’t believe it means anything,” she opined. “I’ll ask Tom to give it back to him for me. What are you looking so solemn about?”

“I was just thinking,” said Louise, “that Jimmie Ray is awful fond of you.”

“Och, he’s too serious,” cried Ellen. “Style!” she jeered. “A book bound all in one color! Oh, Jimmie’s not the only pebble on the beach.”

CHAPTER V

*I*N that great class, of which the Mrs. Adairs are pivot, exactitude is seldom desired in phrasing a thought. Not really what is thought is uttered.

Ellen was a promising daughter. Finding herself becoming bored at home, she suggested to her mother that it was her duty to be out in the world, earning money; and Mrs. Adair, considering that her daughter's "chances" would be enlarged by going out to business, said it was a very sweet thought. Mr. Adair's comment, on hearing that Ellen had voiced a wish to try to get into business, was: "I think a lass should get out and about. She should not feel herself just a pawn in the game, with nothing to look forward to but marriage."

The two women, the elderly and the young, listened to this quietly, and hastened to acquiesce.

"That's just it," said Mrs. Adair.

"Of course," agreed Ellen.

So she joined a shorthand-and-typewriting class; and every evening peals of laughter came from the girls' bedroom, which made old Adair mumble to his wife something about the lassies having a pillow-fight, he supposed, but there was no doubt that going into the world was good for them. "Don't check them, mother; I like to hear the laughter of young people."

"Uh-huh!" said Mrs. Adair, but got up on an elbow to listen thoughtfully.

Nightly Ellen had stories to tell her sister of life as she found it, saw it, made it. Louise chuckled over the narratives of having on the shorthand teacher, of meeting the French-tutor and "bowling him over" with fascinating ways. As Louise enjoyed dancing, and skating at Duddingston when it froze, so she enjoyed the titillation that came from watching men who had an inclination to be, as she called it, "silly"; but, unlike Ellen, she did not think that the basis of every man was silliness. Her creed was not that the most studious scholar delving into the life of old Assyria, the most plodding scientists seeking a way to send messages to Mars, the experimenters seeking to discover cures for all human maladies, or plotting in laboratories how to prolong and perfect life—her creed was not that all

these and all others could be shown to be “silly,” mere excited masculine children, with an amusing desire to kiss the plump bit, as it were, under Ellen’s chin. Louise may have been right—or wrong; Ellen may have been right—or wrong; but the tale goes on.

In that bedroom, with “the fine pieces of furniture,” the broad old bed with the snug, padded headpiece, the large swinging mirror on the big dressing-table, Louise listened and laughed, Ellen blushed and recounted; but now and then, while Ellen saw away into a future in which she would pass, turning men to derision, gaining knowledge and skill, Louise had quick, fleeting, unexpected fears that there would be a dead wall at the end of Ellen’s path—or a precipice. For herself, she confined herself to such amusements only with men who “deserved it”; but Ellen seemed to think that all men deserved it.

“I wonder what Jimmie Ray would think?” Louise said one evening, suddenly solemn, after a story of how the French-teacher had been “silly.”

“Jimmie Ray! Och, he’s the same as the rest, I expect,” answered Ellen. “Of course,” she added, “I would like my husband to respect me.”

Louise propped her head on the pillow, arm under neck, looking up at the ceiling, and meditated, while her sister rubbed her hands with cold-cream and slipped on an old pair of gloves, from which the palms and finger-tips had been cut.

“You don’t respect the men who ‘carry on,’ do you?” asked Louise.

“Me? I’d rather have a man *game* than with long down on his chin, like yon Mr. Snodgrass. That reminds me. I saw Mr. Lane to-day. He was going to the station.”

“Did you ever give him back the book you couldn’t read?” inquired Louise, with greater interest.

“I gave it to Tom to take down one night and tell him I had enjoyed it very much, and it was a nice story. I think Mr. Lane *fancies* himself. I wish I had cut him to-day. I bowed to him, and he gave me one of yon—you know—stand-off kind of hat-lifts. Yon was a rotten night, when he came up to see Tom. O-oh!” She shrieked with a delightful thought.

“What is it?”

“I would like to have Mr. Snodgrass *on* some day. I believe I could.”

Louise desisted from solemnity at this suggestion, and joined her laughter to her sister’s. The picture amused her.

“It would be a shame to try it,” she said, after the laughter.

“It would be awful fun. I would burst myself laughing, if I got him on.”

In the morning, after breakfast, Mrs. Adair turned to the girls.

"I heard you two girls skirling last night about having somebody on," she said. "It is all right; I like you to have your innocent fun; but remember to be ladies. I know your pretty faces could turn half the heads in Edinburgh; but see that you don't turn your own—that's especially for you, Ellen."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Ellen. "I think men are comic, but I know my own value."

"I've always tried to teach you it," Mrs. Adair admitted. "But remember that men don't marry the girls they amuse themselves with."

"Marriage!" scoffed Ellen.

"I wouldn't mind getting married at all," said Louise, "to a real nice man—a man that knew things and could teach me. I would like to be a professor's wife some day—there!" she added with a nod, as if to say: "You can laugh at me if you like. I've said it."

"Well, you're ladylike enough for it," remarked her mother. "And what I always say is that if you prepare yourself for a thing, you'll get it, if it's to be got at all. But you can't get it otherwise. That reminds me, Ellen, did Tom tell you the way Walter Lane looked at yon book he lent you when Tom gave it back?"

"No. What about it?"

"Tom was going to tell you. Mr. Lane took the book and put it down, then lifted it up again and ran the pages open. He didn't say anything, but he looked as if he thought a lot, Tom said. Tom could see it was all thumb-marked."

"Och, I know. I hoped he wouldn't see. I was looking at it after I cold-creamed my hands that night."

"Well, *you'll* not get a professor, my lady!" predicted Mrs. Adair. "You might have known better than to do that, after the way Jimmie and Mr. Lane and yon Mr. Snodgrass spoke about style. I would like my daughter to be stylish. Have a care, Ellen. You are too flighty. And," turning to Louise, "you're older than her, Louise; you should try to set a good example."

"That was a flea in your ear," said Ellen to Louise, as they strutted off down Crown Street, Louise going to business, Ellen to her classes.

CHAPTER VI

THE FEBRUARY wind whirled the chimney-tops, the upright ones like pepper-casters, and the cowed ones, called “auld wives” or “auld wives’ mutches,” because of their likeness to such old dames as one sees pottering on little bricked paths before country cottages, wearing “mutches” on their heads, or to Old Mother Hubbard, or the Old Woman on a Broom. It blew the smoke in disordered eddies over the gray roofs. The sheep in the Meadows (that stretch of open grass in the middle of the south town) huddled near to the protecting trees. The penny boxes, the twopenny boxes, the threepenny boxes on the railing between Grant’s second-hand book-shop and the statue of Greyfriars Bobbie—historic boxes, over which Burton, the historian, was wont to bend, prying and rummaging for beloved volumes, red kerchief hanging out of his tail-coat—wore their canvas covers, and the covers were carefully tied down. The lights in the two little shrine-like niches at the library portal, where smokers were expected to light their pipes instead of scraping the stone with matches, were in a constant state of flutter and danger. Scraps of paper flew along the streets; hats were chased, recovered, lost again, amid merriment. On Calton Hill, a policeman was stationed, to warn of danger those whom the wind did not intimidate, and bid them not to walk round the high path by the observatory wall, lest the wind pluck them up with vehemence, and, making a parachute of their coats or petticoats, cast them down headlong into Greenside. Pigeons were blown about the sky agitatedly, instead of flying in rhythmic and repetitive curves. The inhabitants of Edinburgh were atilt against the wind all day.

Ellen, looking out and seeing the state of affairs, put on her best silk stockings. She had replied to an advertisement in the *Scotsman*, that told of a vacancy for a typist and stenographer, and had received a letter, making an appointment for 10.30 a.m., upon this morning of wild winds, in a George Street office.

Her hair was inevitably a little wild, her cheeks were like red apples, her lips like red rose-petals, as she swung down the Mound, elbows pressed against her hips, hands in a muff that hung low from the long, slender chain that Jimmie had given her for a New Year’s gift; her hat was affixed by three pins, the heads of which were of polished Iona marble, these being also a gift from Jimmie, given to her upon her last birthday anniversary. She did

not care much for the hatpins, would have preferred ones with larger heads, painted ones for preference, or filigree silver ones, Moorish or Byzantine—surely Jimmie would know the kind of thing, when he lived among silver ornaments. Louise assured her that they were simple, and chaste, and “toney”; her mother said that they were ladylike, although so simple that only a lady would know that they were stylish, and quoted that one should not look a gift-horse in the mouth. One fact the gift had shown, and that was that Jimmie was not quite the man for her; his tastes were not her tastes. He would tantalize her with Iona marble, when she wanted macaroni filigree. Still, her mother was pleased with her appearance that morning.

“You look really nice, Ellen,” Mrs. Adair said. “I like that hat and those pins. I think I would take off the bangles, for bangles have nothing to do with business.”

“Perhaps I had better,” Ellen concurred. “I could put them on afterwards, after I have been a while in the place.”

“You could always do that,” her mother agreed. “But it is important to make a good first impression.”

And, indeed, Ellen, coasting round the corner of Bank Street, her dress tumbled by the wind, her supple back swinging, her head tilted against the swirl that chased her round the corner, thought her reflection, in the windows of the end shop, quite satisfactory.

“Louise,” she conjectured, “knows what she is up to when she gets these stylish-cut but quiet things.”

She swung down the Mound, buffeted and gay, rejoicing in the contest, so that young men coming uphill were uncertain whether she were smiling to the wind or to them. Elderly gentlemen—clutching silk hats to their heads, even the sheen of the silk ruffled and disordered to-day, in keeping with the ruffled sparrows and ruffled rain-pools that would soon be blown dry—wondered who the young person was who smiled to them as they plodded up to the Advocates’ Library. She smiled to them, or seemed to remember them, but they could not place her.

She was all gayety, going out into the world to startle its sedateness and tantalize its flippancy. Even the heavy-coated policeman at the end of Hanover Street, she observed, turned about to look at her. She thought, seeing herself in the windows of Princes Street, as she crossed that broad and wind-swept thoroughfare, her frock tempestuous, and in Macara’s window, as she fluttered up Hanover Street, that she looked like some picture of *Spring Winds*, and she regretted that she had not put on her fur stole. She could have let it fly loose now, and thus have added to the effect.

But perhaps the more subtle effect was best. At any rate, she had on the silk stockings, and while the wind and she contested with her skirts, crossing Rose Street, she had the air of saying to it: "Oh, fie!" That prudish-faced old thing sitting in a waiting carriage—cheek!—what did she look at her like that for?—in that vinegary way, as if she had sprung up startled out of a box: that was what she was like—a toy to amuse infants. Ellen smiled the more as the wind and she sported up to the corner of George Street.

And here was George Street, here the door with the phalanx of names on either side—First Floor, Second Floor, Third Floor, Fourth Floor. She had asked Tom what to say to begin with. What did he tell her, again? Oh, yes—her name, and: "I have an appointment for half-past ten." Her heart went pitapat, as, with a movement, left and right, of her head, and a quick combing of her disordered hair, right and left, with one hand, she thrust open a swing-door with the other.

A little office-boy looked up sheepishly at her entrance, and came over to the counter—a gleaming, sumptuous counter, that swept to the inner office in an undulating wave.

"Yes, miss?"

"I have an appointment for ten-thirty."

"Yes. What is the name, please?"

"Miss Adair."

"Thank you. Will you please take a seat?" and the child in long trousers and little, stand-up collar departed, feeling his necktie.

But Ellen did not sit down. She remained standing, because a girl was sitting on the form the small boy had indicated, and another was standing—with puckered mouth, and eyes looking up at her hat-brim—in a kind of superior attitude. Ellen would stand, too. She suspected that these were other applicants. The one who was sitting seemed nervous; the one who was standing had something defiant in her deliberate ignoring of Ellen; it was as if she resented Ellen. Pooh, who was she, anyhow? Ellen's eyes dropped and contemplated this girl's gloves. *Had* to go out to work, by the look of her.

A swing-door, opposite that one by which Ellen had entered, opened, and a young woman swept out, recovering from a bow to someone inside. Behind her appeared the office-boy. Ellen stepped forward, because the silly little fool looked at her; but he turned to the girl of the unapproachable attitude, she who had been standing, ever since Ellen arrived, looking at her eyebrows.

"Will *you* come now, please?" he said.

Ellen felt as if she were at the dentist's. There wasn't much sport about this part of the performance. She was suspicious of the elderly man who appeared now beyond the gleaming counter, advanced to it, and straightened a little packet of pamphlets that stood at the end, looking at her briefly and piercingly between the top rim of his uneven eye-glasses and the overhanging tufts of his gray eyebrows. He went away fussily, and a girl carrying a letter-basket sailed past, not so much as casting a glance at the waiting girls. The subdued young woman on the broad form that had a sweep in it like that of the polished counter, looked up, met Ellen's eye, and smiled. Ellen dropped her eyes, smiled at the floor.

"There are not many of us," said the girl on the bench.

"I beg your pardon?" Ellen answered, so as to give herself time to decide whether she would acknowledge being an applicant for the situation or not.

"Not many of us," the girl repeated. "I tried for a situation last week, and there were twenty applicants—that was with knowledge of French, too—on the short leet. The man was very nice. He didn't arrange for us all to come at the same time and wait in a row, the way I had to once before. But he told me there were nineteen on his short leet already, and I was the last. He was very nice. I said to him: 'That's a good many. I hope I may get the situation.' And he looked at me, and smiled ever so kindly, and said that seeing I answered that way and didn't offer to come for less than the others, he would put my name down and consider my application. He wrote to me next day to say he had decided on another girl. I think it was very nice of him to write, though." She took a breath after this rushing confidence. "It's a funny thing to say to you, but I hope I get this situation"—she smiled—"and so do you, of course. You hope you get it."

"I don't need to work," said Ellen. "I'm only doing it for fun. My father is a designer—head designer—in a decorating house."

This was a momentary inspiration. It had always been "manager" before. Evidently, even in the porch of the world, Ellen's wits were stimulated.

The office-boy appeared, opening the door to give exit to the young woman who had, a few minutes earlier, passed into the place of trial. He nodded to the fluffy girl who had tried to be affable to Ellen.

"This way, please, miss," he said.

Ellen, left alone, sat down. After about five minutes the little fluffy chit reappeared, nodded, and——

"Good-morning," she said, sweetly.

Ellen bowed frigidly, with an air of remoteness, and, heart pitapatting, she passed into the inner office, or corridor of the inner office, crossed that

at the heels of the office-boy, whose air of hush and awe appeared to be intensified there, so greatly intensified that he inspired Ellen with some of it. He held open a door, and at the ushering inclination of his little oiled head (that made wiser people pass in with a restrained chuckle), she drifted into a room lit by two large windows, carpeted with resilient Wilton, feeling herself of consequence, and showing it.

Here sat, before a broad desk, a short, alert, slightly bald, gleaming man—in a blue lounge-suit, such as her father wore on Sunday afternoons. She had expected a frock-coat, or a morning-coat.

“Please sit down,” said this gleaming and clarified-looking man.

As she seated herself, Ellen felt his eyes resting very attentively upon her.

“You are Miss Adair?” he asked. “Miss Ellen Adair?”

“Yes.”

“I have your letter here. I see you have a knowledge of shorthand and typewriting.”

“Oh, yes.”

“Trained where?”

She gave him the name of the school.

“Yes.” He looked at her feet.

She looked at him—at the bald part of his head.

“You’ve never been in a situation before?”

“No.”

“Well, that’s no harm. One must make a beginning somewhere,” and he smiled.

Ellen reciprocated with a lighting of her mottled eyes.

The telephone-bell rang.

“Excuse me a minute,” he said.

“Certainly,” said Ellen. She did not understand the meaning of the brief monologue that followed, spoken quietly into the receiver. It is difficult to understand a conversation when only one half is heard.

“All right—good-by.” The firm little hand, well-manicured, Ellen noticed, hung up the receiver gently.

“Now, Miss Adair, the duties would be to take down my letters in shorthand, and type them. The office-boy brings me the basket of morning letters, to be signed, just before lunch. He copies them—that is an order; you don’t need to tell him; it is his work. In some offices the typist is supposed

to copy. I arrange for my women employees to practice calisthenics in other ways. To copy a dozen letters is physical exercise, and I don't ask it. I stick to the old style of copying-press, and it is heavy. After lunch there are always more letters to take down and type. When I am away, I expect my typist to act as secretary to my cashier. I suppose you have a reference from your school?"

"Yes. I have a copy with me, and the original to show you."

"Well, that's business. You have the rudiments," and he smiled encouragingly.

Ellen responded with an engaging little smile. Tom had told her to make the copy; he was sometimes useful. The little man took the proffered letter and read it, then handed back the original.

"I have eight clerks," he said. "I am afraid you are the kind of young lady who would turn their heads."

At this her nervousness left her. She trilled her laugh.

"Do you think that you could keep them at their work?" he asked. "Or would they be running after you and adoring you, when they should be, according to the terms on which they came here, engaged upon their ledgers?"

Ellen trilled again, delighted, finding the world more as she had hoped it would be.

"I am sorry," said this odd man, handing back the copy of her testimonial, "that I cannot hold out very high hopes to you. I have, indeed, almost settled with the last young woman who was in here. If you do not hear from me to-morrow you may know I have decided elsewhere—and I have to thank you for the offer of your services that you have been good enough to make, and for the trouble you have taken to call."

He rose, opened the door, and bowed, and Ellen rewarded him with a glance of her eyes, not too vivacious but encouraging, something for him to think of when she was gone, and to cause him to decide to have her.

"The gay old man!" she thought, as she danced down to spacious George Street. "I can consider that settled."

She was so sure of it, that when a young man looked rudely down into her eyes, when passing, she was really indignant. A twopenny-halfpenny clerk was "out of it" when she had a charming, smooth-handed, middle-aged, dapper gentleman, who conducted business in gleaming and palatial offices, smitten by her charms.

Considering the interview as she passed up the Mound again, homeward, she saw that he was already almost jealous of his clerks. What sport it would

be to *have him on*—to *have on* the man who was supposed to be your employer. She was very hopeful, so she told her mother; and Mrs. Adair was glad, and did not see why she should not be hopeful.

“You looked real stylish, and yet not showy, as you went off,” she said. “I watched you from the bay-window in the drawing-room.”

But as no word came from George Street next day, nor the day after, Ellen was forced to decide that that artful little chit of a mouse, who had sat back so pensively on the sweeping form, had got the billet, and was by that time sedately hammering on a typewriter keyboard.

CHAPTER VII

AGAIN ELLEN sailed forth in quest of employment, more with abandon now than with hope, because several attempts to secure work had been as abortive as the first. Some replies to her applications, in response to advertisements, she had not answered, merely ignored, because they came from localities or from business houses that were beneath her dignity, in her own eyes and her mother's. One that she had let go, for example, without any reply to the letter that asked her to call, was that of bookkeeper and typist in a cab-office; another was as general clerk in a coal-office.

Now, with time passing, and she still idle, she felt affairs changing at home. Her original suggestion that she should go into the world had been received kindly, if not enthusiastically; she had been told that she did not really require to go out to work, but that it would broaden her mind, that it would widen her outlook. With her succession of failures to obtain employment, there was growing, it seemed to her, a doubt in her capacity.

Her mother seemed more eager that she should get something to do, though drawing the line at her daughter being clerk in a cab-office or a coal-depot. When, in response to her application for a typist's post, she received a letter from a new book-shop in Leith Street, requesting her presence, she and Mrs. Adair weighed it together. Leith Street was not like Princes Street, and Mrs. Adair would have liked Ellen to be as genteel in her precincts. Leith Street, to Mrs. Adair's olfactory and retinal senses, had an atmosphere of fish-supper shops, and a glare of undesirable public-houses; and it led to Leith Walk—which led to Leith and the docks.

"I wonder why book-shops are so often in vulgar neighborhoods?" said she. "What is the number? Oh, it is the top end. Well, there are some good shops there. There are one or two good boot-shops, and there is a big chemist-store, and there are one or two jewelers. What about Jimmie Ray seeing you going to work in a shop down there every day?"

"There is nothing to be ashamed of in honest work!" cried Ellen, her eyes flashing. Jimmie was a bugbear.

"It will always," said Mrs. Adair, "be an incentive to you to conduct yourself like a lady, him being so near."

"Och, Jimmie Ray is a sumph."

“My dear, don’t be vulgar.”

“You’re always throwing Jimmie at me!”

“Oh, no, Ellen. I make no objection to Jimmie coming here. We all know he comes to see you. I like to let young people be young people, but as to giving you any hint of my feelings, one way or another, about Jimmie Ray, that’s a thing I have never done. The only thing I have been doubtful about is whether you should accept so many presents from him. And if you don’t feel at least friendly to him——”

“He can’t buy me!” Ellen objected. “I’ve a sense of my own dignity.”

“Well, well, this is not talking about whether you should reply to this book-shop offer. After all, a book-shop is *classy*. You might get out of it into one in Princes Street. There’s a big book-shop opposite the University; and there is a slightly stylish one near the Free Library. And I never forget that remark Walter Lane, the architect, made about *some* books having style.”

“If you’ve done, I’ll get off,” said Ellen.

“Ellen!”

Ellen knew the tone, and, pouting and with a frown on her forehead, she went away, none too seraphic, to don a hat and coat, and flip round her neck a long silk scarf, with fringed ends, that she thought gave finish to her toilette.

“I’m going to take *this* situation,” she announced before departing.

“We’ll see. You will listen to all that is said, and weigh it, and consider ——”

“And take it!” repeated Ellen.

“Maybe you won’t suit,” said Mrs. Adair. “You’re very hoity-toity this morning.”

“Och, I’m fed up,” cried Ellen.

Mrs. Adair looked at her daughter indignantly.

“There’s a phrase for a lady! And after all my training of you.”

“Well, I’m off!” said Ellen. And away she flounced—and would doubtless have retained the frown on her brows all the way to the Mound, had she not seen the tenor advancing in her direction (he of the lollipop incident), and felt it necessary to approach him smiling, so that, when she came close to bowing-point, she could solemnize her face, eliminate a smile, and appear frigid.

The tenor appeared doubtful whether to bow or not. She had not seen him for months. He had left the choir. But she knew that if she bowed, he would respond—he was not the kind of cad to cut a lady. She peeped at him

and gathered from his expression that he would like to go past without any sign of recognition. Had he looked as if he expected a bow, she would have cut him; but his cheek in looking annoyed at meeting her was too much for Ellen. Her little breasts puffed up indignantly. She threw out her feet in a triumphant fashion, stretching her arms taut, and holding her muff low down at the full length of its chain, tossing her head, a faint, mocking smile, the while, arching her lips slightly; and then she appeared to see him, and suddenly—no, in the event she cut him dead. As she marched on, the encounter accomplished, the corners of her mouth puckered up in delight, the dimples showed in her rosy cheeks. The tenor went on content. Had she bowed, he would have had to according to his sociological beliefs; but—once cut, always cut. Next time they met he would be preyed upon by no trepidation and suspense; he would know what was going to happen.

On swung Ellen gayly, along George IV Bridge, down Bank Street. At the corner there, her scarf flew wide from her throat; and with a circular flip of her right hand she sent it flying forth and back round her neck. But instead of it falling down her back engagingly, it smote an elderly gentleman upon the head, he just passing her. Out of a puckering-lipped consideration of briefs, or legal points, or perchance dates of vintages, he came with a start, aware of some collision; and, being of the old school, he took for granted that, were he the guilty party or not, at any rate in the eyes of the angels an apology would not make matters worse. He doffed, baring his venerable head, and said:

“I beg your pardon!”

Ellen cast him a roguish glance over her shoulder.

“Don’t mensh!” she trilled.

In Princes Street the ragged boys were selling daffodils. “Violets and daffodeels! Violets and daffodeels!” they shouted, in harsh voices, and turned to tell each other it was cold, by Gee, beating their blue-black hands on their sides. Whirls of wind came round the corners. The pavements appeared to have been bleached. Ever and again, little bursts of snow surged down, were eddied up, and away, and dissipated, as if someone had tossed a bag of flour to the gusty morning. Spring was not yet, only its harbingers—the soaring daffodils in the dirty hands of these gamins whom the city feeds at soup-kitchens, and from whom it buys the evening papers, and, in the changing seasons, violets, daffodils, irises, primroses, roses, lilies-of-the-valley, and white heather.

Ellen bought a bunch of violets, tied thickly against two leaves, and pinned them, as she went, in the middle of her breast, looking down at them, chin in neck, then, half turning, as she walked, to see the complete effect

revealed, subdued and flattering, in the great polished plate-glass fronts of the stately shops. "Hi! Yi!" a carter speeded her, in crossing Saint Andrew Street; and she walked on angrily. It showed his breeding! A vulgar carter! That old gentleman on the Mound had apologized to her—though he wasn't in the wrong. "Hi! Yi!" at her!

Thus she was belligerent when she came to the new book-shop in Leith Street, swinging past Walker and Ray's emporium of trinkets and silverware, without so much as a glance at her own reflection.

"'J. Hyke, Second-Hand Books,' " she read. "Second-hand! Pooh! Well, we'll see, Mr. Hyke."

The shop had one large plate-glass window, with six shelves, one above the other, running from side to side. Outside, two boxes were affixed every morning, laden with volumes for sale at twopence and threepence. A shallow case also fitted onto a wall, to left, in the narrow entranceway, a case in which prints could be exposed. Within, on the ceiling above the window-space, there was a mirror, so placed that the proprietor or his assistant could, by glancing up at it while standing in the shop's interior, observe if any pilferer was pocketing books out of the outside boxes. A long counter ran half-way down the shop, a third of its length topped with glass, so that rare editions could be shown there, as in a museum case, treasured volumes that were not to be handled by any casual looker-round, but only taken out carefully to show, at closer range, to any customer who might specially request a closer scrutiny. At the back of the shop, another mirror hung; but it was not for sale. It was there so as to allow of the proprietor being able to study customers without appearing to do so.

Inside the shop, Ellen, after descending the two little steps at the entrance, found a man on the top of a long ladder, his head bent in an attitude of precaution against cracking it on the ceiling. He held a hammer in his hand, and below, at the foot of the ladder, was a great, heavy man, with blue eyes like a blending of a doll's and a fish's, holding in his extended hands a large, framed picture, in garish colors, of what seemed to be a Saturday At Home in the South Back of the Canongate. This was Hyke, Jerry Hyke, whom his familiars called Jeremiah.

He set down the print.

"Yes, missy?" he said, looked deep in her eyes, and added: "My dear."

He was evidently not a gentleman, but her mother need not know of this. An odor of cigars accompanied him, announced his arrivals, and tarried after his departures; his protruding under-lip made women of sensitive dispositions avert their eyes in repulsion. He had a lid of a mustache, stained

and wet; flabby, red fingers, puffy between the knuckles. He laughed a thick laugh, that had learnt its tone over indelicate anecdotes, bereft of humor.

"I have come in response to your letter," said Ellen.

"Quite so. You're Miss Adair—shorthand and typing. How do you like this picture?" and he held up the print.

"It's—er—it's—well——"

"Observe the color."

"Yes," said Ellen.

"And the marvelous fidelity to type."

"Yes."

"A riotous thing," he said. "Wonderful work. Just fixes these wild, uncouth people."

"They are a bit vulgar," agreed Ellen.

"Vulgar? Observe the woman whacking her husband with a beer-bottle."

Ellen was as greatly flabbergasted as her mother would have been at the familiar manner of this coarse creature. But she laughed gayly; whereas her mother would have bridled, and, probably declaiming that he was "no gentleman," have ruffled from that shop. After all, Ellen considered rapidly, this was a pleasanter reception than that accorded to her by the dapper, bald-headed gentleman in the polished offices in George Street.

"How much do you want?" asked Hyke, abruptly, and looked up at the man on the ladder, winking.

"What are the duties?" said Ellen.

"Duties? To sit over there at that table in the stern of the ship, and take down the titles and descriptions of books, date and price, as I sing out to you. Then—see here, in these pigeon-holes—you notice they are all labeled with a letter of the alphabet—you will put slips with the names of the books, arranging them alphabetically. After that you will paste them up, alphabetically, on sheets of paper, and they will go to the printer. While the catalogue is being printed you'll begin addressing envelopes. Then we'll fall to in a glorious bout, putting the catalogues in envelopes. My assistant"—he jerked his thumb up, indicating the top of the ladder, and winked to Ellen—"will post them. That's all the work; only, if I happen to be out, and he happens to be called away for any reason"—and he winked again—"I'll expect you to pocket your pride for the time being, and just see what anybody wants who comes into the shop. That won't happen oftener than I can help; but I like to put it all plain at the beginning, so that there can be no recriminations afterwards, and young lady typists sometimes consider it

beneath their dignity to entertain a customer in an emergency till the customer can be attended to. I don't expect you to be a saleswoman and sell books; but if the shop fills up, and I am attending to someone, and Mr. Evans, my assistant, is attending to someone, I take it you won't think it *infra*—you know—to make an appearance, if you see anybody fidgeting to be attended to, and you can just sweetly ask whoever it is to wait a minute—little things like that, you know.”

“I see—I understand.”

“I'll give you a pound a week.”

“What are the hours?”

“Nine to six, for you, and an hour for lunch. Two o'clock on Saturdays—for you. How do you like my shop?”

“It's very pretty,” said Ellen. “I like this counter with the glass top.”

“Yes, that's ‘toney,’ isn't it?”

“It's very nice. It looks—genteel.”

“Oho! Oh, yes. Do you know what this is?” and he handed her a book to look at.

“It's a Bible.”

“Got it first shot!” he said, and tee-heed. “It is worth hundreds of pounds.”

“Is it, really?”

“Really—yes. Last copy sold at auction, November 14th—Sotheby's—for three hundred and fifty pounds.”

“I did not know books could fetch so much,” said Ellen, grasping the essentials of this piece of information.

“Always learning,” said Hyke.

“But a Bible!” Ellen ejaculated.

“Wonderful book,” commented Hyke. “Isn't it? Ever read the Bible? I expect you've read some little bits. Surely you've heard of Lot—and Lot's wife—to say nothing of his daughters?”

His great paunch shook with contained laughter. Of the insides of books—with the exception of those that might contain words, or phrases, or pictures, or woodcuts, or engravings, that might be considered, or were, indecent—he knew nothing. But with book-prices he was conversant; and he knew all sorts of fine points regarding differences of editions.

“Books are like men,” he went on, after laughing to himself. “You cannot always tell a man by the rags he has on. Well—I think you'll suit me.

Do you mind playing a tune on the machine, just to let me see how you handle it?"

Laughing at this "game" and waggish man, Ellen walked to the rear of the shop and drew off her gloves.

"There's paper," said Hyke. "See—there's a specimen catalogue. You see how it is done. Look." He selected an item, and put the catalogue down beside her. "Now just tap that out and let me see the result," he said.

Ellen managed to copy the incomprehensible item, with only two errors, an achievement which satisfied Hyke.

"That'll do," he said. "You'll learn by experience."

"I'll come," said Ellen.

"Very good. Start to-morrow?"

"Yes—I could start to-morrow."

"All right."

Flipping her fringe-bordered scarf over her shoulder, Ellen marched gayly up the two steps, into Leith Street.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. HYKE'S first catalogue was an enormous success. The thing was phenomenal. Almost every book in it sold; all day long, he was busy in the shop attending to callers. All day long, Evans, the assistant, was vigorously occupied responding to orders, parcelling up books, running across to the post-office to dispatch them.

Ellen had been very busy at first, but now came a lull for her. She had assisted, in moods varying from the interested to the bored, in the sowing; and the reaping she merely watched. Till Hyke could find time to dictate the new catalogue, which, he said, he was going to get ready soon, her presence was almost forgotten at times.

She had, however, labels to address, accounts to receipt, and once a day she went out to the bank with the gathering proceeds of Hyke's first venture as his own master. When there were no more labels to address, no more accounts to receipt, she took from her bag a box of chocolates and the current issue of *Woman's Home Weekly*, and read about the way to remove blackheads, or pored over an instalment of the serial story about the earl and the chorus-girl, no more interested in the insides of all these books that brought so many real gentlemen—as she was glad to be able to tell her mother—daily into the shop, than was her employer.

Ellen had told Mrs. Adair very little about the manner of the reception accorded her on the day she first saw the amazing Jerry, but now she was more communicative. She told of the young men, in loose clothes and floppy hats; she expatiated on other young men, splendidly groomed; she described the elderly men with clean-shaven faces, gold-rimmed pince-nez, and sonorous voices—which she imitated, explanatory-wise.

“Well, Ellen,” advised her mother, “it is very nice that Mr. Hyke has such stylish customers; but remember that you are his cashier, not a shop-assistant. Be gracious to them, and ladylike, but do not let them imagine that you are a counter-hand. You are really the cashier, from what you say, and if you oblige Mr. Hyke at any time by chatting to any customer while others are being attended to by him or his assistant, let them see you do so only as a lady, and that you know your place.”

Thus it was that Ellen, toying with her pearl necklace, aware of her own importance and desirability, and bastioned by her mother's fond advice, would ask in falsetto, having heard "ladies" talk so, if it were not a cold day, or explain that it was colder this year than it had been last year at the same time, to some staid and courteous old rotundity, who, catalogue in one hand, eye-glasses in another, would continue to agree, until Hyke, or Evans, would approach with: "Now, sir, what can I supply you with?" Indeed, Ellen coined a phrase for use in these moments when she stepped into the breach: "Will you be so good as to wait till the assistant is disengaged?" Then, "Mr. Evans," she would say, "a copy of—er—um—Mr. Evans, this gentleman, please."

Hyke, observing her complaisance, gave her an increase of ten shillings a week at the end of her sixth week in his service; and as she had access to the ledgers, if the careless account-books can be so styled, she discovered that this sum—thirty shillings—was as much as Evans earned. So she began to comport herself as if she were a kind of lady shop-walker.

But suddenly, after the first catalogue had seen its day, after all the books were sold, and the last letters had been dispatched which read: "Dear Sir, I thank you for your esteemed order, but regret to say that the books you ask for have been already sold. Inclosed find remittance returned. Thanking you for your esteemed order, and in the hope that we may be able to do business over my next catalogue, which will be sent to you in due course——" after the last of these letters had been dispatched, Hyke went off on what Evans, who was not a "gentleman," called "the tiddley." Ellen drew erect, when the assistant, in a tone she found familiar (considering that she had a salary of thirty shillings a week, as well as he) commented so, one afternoon. "The boss is out a long time. I expect he's on the tiddley." She remarked that she had noticed the odor of drink on Mr. Hyke, and stated that if her mother knew, that lady would order her to leave the shop immediately.

"Happy you!" said Evans. "It is not everybody can chuck up a job because of little things like the smell of tippeny on a boss's breath."

"I don't *have* to work," Ellen informed him, arranging her necklace. "My father is manager for a firm of decorators. He is rather averse to my working at all."

"Go on! Your father! I've been in Edinburgh too long for you to cod me. A manager doesn't put up the shutters. I saw your father putting up the shutters the other night."

Ellen had never expected this. Her eyes showed horror over the error into which her hankering to seem "stylish" had led her. What could she say? Evans evidently knew. She looked up at him—her face slowly lost its

expression of horror at being discovered, her roguish eyes twinkled. She looked slyly at Evans, gave a little fascinating smile, and to herself she thought: "I'll punish him for talking about my father like that."

Very engaging, very alluring did she look, as, with dancing eyes, parted lips, and naïve manner she recovered from her disaster. Evans bent to her deliberately, took her chin with thumb and forefinger, and pinched it. She laughed up in his face. An artist, seeking for Delilah's smile, would have been enraptured, entranced, had he but seen Ellen then. Evans stroked her cheek. To herself she said: "Go on! I'll lead you a dance!"

"Look out, there's somebody!" she warned.

Evans fussed off, to attend to the customer who entered, and Ellen took a chocolate from her bag and nibbled demurely, looking very wise. This was only the beginning of things. Louise, she considered, perhaps knew a thing or two in the art of baiting men, could *have on* men, and knew how to *put them in their places*; but Louise was an infant at the game!

Ellen's changing eyes looked solemnly before her, and she saw the nebulous possibilities in this little book-shop. She suppressed her hilarity, her tendency to whoop with delight, subdued herself into quietly considering that she had a far way to travel. There was much more of this intoxicating draft to quaff; she had but sipped. Evans was going to feel sick for catching her up about her father.

When he had served the customer, pulled open the till, flicked some money into it, closed it gayly, and came strolling back toward her, she was just putting on her goloshes, her attitude just that attitude that she had studied often in the long wardrobe-mirror in the "front-door house" in Crown Street. The goloshes were large enough; but she had difficulty in putting them on, real or assumed.

"Allow me," Evans offered.

"No, thank you," said Ellen.

"Go on," he persisted.

"There! I've got them on!" she cried, and leapt to her feet, slapping his hand extended to her. "I'm off to the bank. I was nearly forgetting."

Away she went, out of the shop, going deliberately up the two steps, and, at the top, standing for a moment to pluck up her frock and shake out her petticoat, before going into the rain. She had great trouble with her umbrella, but eventually she succeeded in opening it. With a glance over her shoulder, she saw Evans looking upon her, distracted, and then sped away. The clerk in the bank found her very gay, bright-eyed, even more than usual. Well he

might, for Ellen was chuckling to herself, tasting, in anticipation, the joy that was to come when she made a fool of Evans.

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” she thought to herself. “He’ll be daft for me to come back. I’ll make a fool of him for knowing about father.”

On her way back she encountered the tall singer whom we saw once at the Saturday bandstand; and stopping to speak to him, she noticed how many people, in passing, looked twice at her, at him. She knew the men all envied this adulating pose of the long, bending dude; she knew the women were all jealous. It was a great day.

“The rain is like diamonds on your hair,” said the singer.

“My hair’s draggled, I expect,” answered Ellen.

“No, re’lly, it’s charming,” he declared. “You’re awfully fascinating.”

“Och, go away.”

“Come and have tea with me. Come on.”

“I can’t. I must go.”

“Do-o!”

“No, I can’t. I’m in a hurry—really.”

“Oh, do-o-o!”

“I tell you I can’t. I’m in a hurry to-day.” She had told Tom to keep mum about her being in the Leith Street shop, and did not say she had to go back to work.

“Some other day?” pleaded the adorer.

“Perhaps. Good-by.”

“Don’t run away.”

He clung to her hand; but Ellen drew hers slowly away, whirled about, laughing over her shoulder, flipped her silk scarf round her neck so that it slapped his cheek—and he looked as if it were a caress. It was almost a peal of laughter that she gave then. And, elated, she returned to the book-shop.

She saw, on arriving, with a quick glance into the long, dusky interior, that Hyke had not yet come back, that Evans was alone. No silly old grayhead stood in the shop, umbrella between knees, nose in silly, little, calf-bound volume. No soft-speaking and motionless young man, with immobile face, looked at the collection of book-plates that had been soaked off the covers of old books of no value, books that, when the plates had been removed, were tossed into the twopenny and threepenny boxes.

Evans was at the rear of the shop, arranging a pile of heavy tomes on a shelf. She looked at him sharply and noticed that he seemed to be glum. She was somewhat puzzled. He appeared more like a man in a pet than one who had fallen under her spell and longed for her return. So far she knew but the friskiness, not the savagery, of the Dæmon she served.

Thoughtfully she seated herself, without a word. Evans went on with his arranging of heavy tomes. She turned her head slightly and glanced at him. She was uncertain. She had to take soundings.

“It *is* wet to-day,” she said.

“Yes.”

He lifted an armful of books from one shelf to another. She stole another look at him. Feeling her hair where the rain had wet it with the “diamonds” of that “long comic,” as she considered him, and called him, when telling Louise of his little ways, Ellen sat solemn. There was a change in Evans. She could not understand him. Here was a man different from the man she had left, when she departed to the bank. Yet surely her intuition had not failed her. He had been on the point of familiarity before she went out; now he was sullen.

She wondered what he was thinking. Perhaps he thought he had gone too far already; if he thought that, if that was the conclusion he had come to in her absence, then she should have been content to squash him lightly, before going out, instead of delaying in the hope of a later and more definite victory. She should have called him to order at once, not slapped his hand when he wanted to help her with her goloshes. This relative position of Ellen and Evans on the board was intolerable to Ellen.

There was an arrangement of board-backed shelves to one side, at the rear of the shop, that made a little alcove, in which hung a cracked mirror, and a clothes-brush depending by a long string from a nail in the wall.

“My hair’s got wet,” Ellen said, as if talking to herself.

Rising, she stepped past Evans, gently brushing against his back, and drifted into the recess.

“What a fright!” she ejaculated, from behind the screening shelves.

Next minute she had the solution to Mr. Evans’s manner. He came incontinently after her. She saw him in the mirror, but he was not looking at her reflection—he was looking at her back. Carefully she eyed him, and when he flung his arms round her waist she leapt back.

“Mr. Evans!” she cried. “How *dare* you take such liberties? Don’t! Don’t! I’ll tell your wife. I know you’re married. I know where you live. I’ll tell——”

He fell back.

“Let me pass. I’ll go right down to Pilrig Street and tell your wife.”

He stood aside, and Ellen clutched her hat, her hatpins—not, by the way, Jimmie’s simple “toney” ones, but others that she had bought for herself since coming out into the world.

“My God!” said Evans. “You mustn’t! My wife’s ill. You mustn’t.”

Her lips curled with contempt.

“I don’t care! She’s going to know. How dare you take such liberties with me?”

A thick voice hailed them from the doorway.

“Hullo, what’s that?” And Hyke, odorous as a distillery, but walking perfectly sedately, advanced upon them. “Has he been trying to monkey with you?” He blew out his mustache. His eyes were bloodshot beyond their usual. “What did he do?”

“I can’t tell you,” Ellen gasped, hands raised to her hat, delighted at this new turn of affairs.

“She——” began Evans, and stopped.

“I did what? You’ll be saying I led you on. Oh! And you a married man! I’m sorry for your poor wife.”

At the words “married man” Hyke started.

“Um, um!” he mumbled. Then, to Ellen: “Come, Miss Adair, don’t make a scene. Put your hat down. You, Evans, put your hat *on*.” He fumbled in his pocket and drew forth the pigskin purse, extracted thirty shillings. “That’s your money to the end of the week. Just get out as quick as you can. I forgot you were a married man.”

Evans held out his hand, as if subconsciously, and accepted the sovereign and half-sovereign that Hyke dropped into his palm.

“My wife’s all right,” he said. “*She’s* all right.”

“Ah, yes,” Hyke commented, “but if anything happened, there would be no use blaming a married man. The bachelor would get it.”

He laughed his gross laugh. But the rudeness of the suggestion in his words was lost on Ellen. Head in air, she said:

“My mother would not let me stay here another minute if she knew.”

“Well, well—he’s going now. Go on, Evans, get out.”

Evans put on his hat.

“My father always says I don’t really need to work,” said Ellen to Hyke, removing her hat, as if doubtfully. “He’s been almost against it, since”—she

raised her voice and chanted the words at Evans in a way that puzzled her employer—"he became manager of his firm."

Evans, with glaring eyes, marched out of the shop, his heels hammering a tattoo of desperation, and made a bee-line for the nearest public-house.

"I'll get a better class of man for the next assistant," promised Hyke. "I'm sorry about this."

"I'm accustomed to gentlemen," said Ellen, perking up her head, her eyes bright and scintillating, her cheeks aflame.

CHAPTER IX

JOHN ROBB, the new assistant at Jerry Hyke's book-shop, had been taken on as an experiment. It was something novel for Hyke to hear a young man give, as his reason for wishing to work in a book-shop, that he was fond of books. And when the young man further explained that he had been working in a book-shop in Glasgow, but wished to come to Edinburgh because of the associations of Edinburgh, Hyke, feeling he had met something unusual, engaged him. What Robb thought of Hyke was chiefly that he had hands too horrible to touch the flowers of literature. Other thoughts he had, too, as time went on, both of Hyke and the "lady cashier."

Whether he was a sumph, or cunning, or a fool, Ellen did not know. All she knew was that she couldn't stand him. If he did not alter his manners, she decided, she would chuck the job. Of her adventure with the first assistant she had told her sister not one word. Of the new one she said: "I can't stand him."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. Maybe I'll find out."

It was a relief to her when he went out, with a note-book in his pocket, upon what is called "the round for reports." Customers of Hyke's often wrote, asking him if he could procure books not in the catalogue; and when these letters came, John Robb would set off to make inquiry for the desired volumes in all the book-shops in town, and, if he could run them to earth, would return with his report of price and condition of the discovered copies. Yes, it was a relief to Ellen when he went out, and yet she always wearied for him to return.

Hyke had taken hold again upon sobriety, after the departure of his first assistant, had set to work preparing his new catalogue, and in the completion of that interesting pamphlet the new assistant had helped. Having sent it to the printer's, Hyke allowed himself a little relaxation. Seeing that Robb was trustworthy, he absented himself for hours daily, to consider ale and uncouth anecdote in a public-house of the vicinity.

One day, on his return from "going the round for reports," John found that Hyke had gone; the typist was flirting wildly with a plumber (nominally electrician) who had come to affix a new row of lights; and the first pages of

catalogue-proofs awaited him on the counter. He began to read the proofs with avidity, the making of second-hand catalogues seeming to him a romantic occupation.

The plumber went on with his work, Ellen with hers. She was angry at this unknown quantity in the shop. At length he finished reading the proofs.

"Just going off to the printer's," he said, "if Mr. Hyke comes in."

"All right," she replied.

When the new assistant returned, after delivering these corrected pages, he found that the plumber had finished his work, but was amusing the typist. Her laugh came to John's ears as he entered. The plumber shouldered his tools, and, with a "good-night," departed. John, his work finished, and no customer appearing, took down a book and began to read. He could never get over the wonder of all these tomes around him.

"Well!" said Ellen. "That plumber *is* cheeky. He doesn't know his place."

"He looked a cheery sort of fellow," remarked John Robb, and went on reading.

"You're deep in your book," said Ellen, after a long silence.

"I've got a wonderful thing here."

"What is it?"

"It's an Irish peasant love-song."

"Oh?" She rose and came toward him, eying him with interest.

"Yes—it begins: 'It is late last night the dog was speaking of you; the _____,'"

So different was this from what Ellen had expected, and so absurd withal, that she burst into a shriek of laughter. John Robb looked as if someone had plunged a knife in him.

"Let me see it," she said, when her laughter was over.

"I've lost the place," he answered; and at that moment Hyke entered, and looked sharply and suspiciously upon his two employees.

He carried one or two books in his hand.

"I want you," he said to John.

Ellen went back to her chair, and Robb turned to Hyke.

"Hush!" said Jerry. "Look at this. It's an old dictionary."

He turned the pages and came to a word that, when the dictionary was printed, was used by all, noble and mean, but that to-day has become vulgarized. Hyke pointed it out with bulgy finger and tee-heed with delight.

John read the word, and its explanation.

“Yes,” he said. “That word still lingers.”

“Here’s something else. You won’t show this to Miss ——” Hyke wagged his head in the direction of Ellen, and opened a Bible, with a decorated title-page, that showed angels in a state of nature, just as one sees human beings in a Turkish bath. “Look at that. That must go in the catalogue as *curious*. Look at this of Adam and Eve, what?” and he laughed thickly again. “This must go as *curious*. I have a good list of buyers of *curious* books.”

“But,” objected John, “I thought *curious* meant indelicate. Won’t it seem rather like a young ladies’ seminary if you put this in your catalogue as *curious*? There is nothing curious about the normal.”

“Normal! Normal? About the what-do-you-call-it?”

“About the normal?”

“But this is *curious*. Look at that angel. Isn’t that *curious*?”

John gave a great burst of laughter—at Hyke. Ellen peeped to see what they were so hilarious about.

“Oh, yes, my boy, you put that among the Addenda of the new catalogue: Bible—date—engravings—*curious*.”

Robb said “Very good,” and registered the thought that there are people in the world who would laugh at a navel-orange.

“And by the way,” said Hyke, “would you take this parcel down to the Waverley Station, and leave it in the East cloakroom? A customer who lives at Hawthornden got a left-luggage ticket for it this morning when you were out.”

Hawthornden! The very name was like music in the ears of the new assistant.

“I know that all beneath the moon decays
And what by mortals in this world is wrought
In Time’s great periods must return to naught.”

So had said Drummond of Hawthornden.

John threw on his hat and jauntily went across to the station. Somebody says that he who goes out looking for a man will find him. Someone else is skeptical, and, made quiet by many disillusionments, has said, in meter, that nowhere can he find the faces serene with great beauty. Be that as it may, just after John had thrust the books across the rough, hacked counter, and nodded to the porter in charge (who, glancing at the parcel, acknowledged it

with “Right!”), he saw an elderly man with profuse white hair and white whiskers, an elderly man, cloaked, wearing a soft hat, holding in his hand a sheaf of papers, walk past with a countenance that made John jump. Surely, thus did Arnold’s Scholar Gypsy appear to the passers-by, curious and incurious, at Bab-lock-hithe.

A porter was looking after the aging man with the abstracted air. John studied him again. The face had seemed familiar. He stepped to the porter and said: “Do you know who that is?”

“That? No. He came in on the train from Aberdeen.”

“It may not be Andrew Lang,” Robb mused; and then, “Yet I don’t know. Can one come in on that train from St. Andrews?” he asked, considering that the poet whom he thought he had seen, lived, or visited, there.

The porter went over to a wall time-table and ran a chisel-nailed finger down the columns of figures.

“It would be a good train from St. Andrews,” he replied. “Passengers from St. Andrews change at Luchars Junction, and they have only three minutes to wait.”

“Thank you,” said John.

The porter wiped his hand on his trousers. Doubtless he was making more per week than John; but those who are built in such a way as to care to know that they have met a poet, even a minor poet, have to pay. So John disbursed threepence, and looked after the author of *Letters to Dead Authors*, and singer of *Twilight and Tweed and Eildon Hill*; and that lyric rang in his ears as he returned to the second-hand book-shop in Leith Street, to find that Hyke was out again, and that the typist was flirting with a carpenter—or joiner, to speak locally—who had come to fit up new shelves.

But he paid no heed to these things. Robb had seen a volume by Andrew Lang somewhere in the shop; and in his crass simplicity, being unable to lay hands on it, he asked Ellen, who was now holding her ears, while the carpenter hammered:

“I say, Miss Adair, have you noticed a copy of *Helen of Troy* anywhere?”

“Of what?” she asked triumphantly.

“*Helen of Troy*. I thought I had seen a copy somewhere, but it is not under ‘L.’”

“What would it be under ‘L’ for?”

“Lang—Andrew Lang—the author’s name. Have you seen it?”

“I’m astonished at you,” said Ellen. “I thought you’d have known it’s *Ellen*, not *Helen*.”

“Well, er, this is different,” Robb explained, diffidently. “This is not an Ellen. This is Helen—you know—of Troy.”

“Helen!”

“Yes.”

“I haven’t seen your book.”

“Thank you,” he said, crestfallen. “I’m sorry I troubled you.”

“Oh, don’t mensh.”

CHAPTER X

ELLEN had been reticent, at home, regarding Assistant Number One at Hyke's emporium, reticent, indeed, about her work altogether, continuing to maintain that air of what is called "huff"—an air as of one resentful of questions, regarding them as evidence of meddling, rather than of interest.

Certainly, she gave no hint of the Evans affair; and now, in talking to Louise of the day's doings, she said little of Robb, at first. But as the days passed on, and he became more distasteful to her, she told her sister that he was a conceited fool, and that he would make her get up and yell, one day.

She cited his ignorance of how to pronounce the name Helen, and thus stumbled upon a piece of news, because Louise said that it was right to sound the 'H,' and on the spur of the moment gave Walter Lane as her authority.

"He mentioned the name the other day," she said. "He was speaking of Helen of Troy."

"Oh! Have you been seeing Walter Lane? Is he back in Edinburgh?"

"Yes," Louise replied, demurely. "He has started in partnership, in Edinburgh. I hope he gets on."

"He never comes to see us here," said Ellen.

"No."

"Och, I thought he was game! It's that sumph of a father of ours—he'd drive away anything classy. Mother is stylish, but what can you do with a man like father? Men are all sumphs."

"I don't know about that," said Louise. "If you try to help men, instead of—er—having them on, they're all right."

"Oho! What's come to you? You'll be joining the Dorcas Society next."

"I'm glad I never went very far with men," said Louise. "They feel it. One of the two, anyhow, always gets hurt in flirting."

"Och, you're getting serious. I know what it is—you're getting old! Got any gray hairs? Let me see."

"Don't go on like that, Ellen."

"I say, would you like to come and see me in the shop?" asked Ellen abruptly.

"What for? Why do you ask in that way?"

"Because you look so toney in that costume you wear. It would put that assistant right. He thinks I'm nothing. I keep on dropping hints, mentioning that Tom's in an insurance office, and one day I said that a lady that came in was like mother. She was awfully stylish, and I said mother was stylish, and he only said: 'Oh, indeed!' It was horrible, the way he said it. I can't abide him. And he's so polite to me—it makes me mad. I wish you'd come in with that costume on, and your serious manner—and snub him."

"Why did the First Assistant leave?" asked Louise, looking keenly at her sister. "You've never told me."

"He went too far. He tried to take liberties with me."

"Did he?"

"What do you look like that for?"

"You said nothing about it."

"Och, it was too horrid." Ellen paused, and then said suddenly: "It wasn't that at all. He told me father was only a common porter, and that he put up shutters, and I got him on till he—oh, it was great! He rushed at me like a tom-cat——"

"Ellen!" said Louise.

"Louise!" mocked Ellen, gayly. "Yes, and Hyke came in in the middle, and gave him his week's money, and told him to walk; and I said: 'That's for saying my father's a five-eighths porter!' "

"It wasn't very ladylike of you to say that."

"Well, I didn't say that exactly. I gave him to understand. Och, I forget."

"You've got to take care of yourself, Ellen, I can see that. You're beginning to look—I don't quite know—flighty, I think. And it is silly to tell people your mother is stylish. A real lady doesn't talk that way."

"Well, as for you," said Ellen, "you're beginning to look as if you couldn't help it. I suppose you are trying to catch Walter Lane. If you meet him, why don't you ask him to come to the house?"

"To sing comic songs and throw cushions?" asked Louise.

"Oh!" cried Ellen, enlightened. "I see what it is. You are a superior person. That's it, is it? Here's mother. Mother, Louise says she thinks we're a lot of vulgar people in this house."

Mrs. Adair looked from one to the other.

"I do my best for you girls. I've always heard that if a mother tries to improve her children, they turn round and rend; but I'll not believe it of my lassies."

"Can't bring her sweetheart to the house because he's too stylish!" said Ellen, clapping her hands together, flicking out her feet, and clicking the high heels together.

"I'm sure she says nothing of the kind! You're the only girls I have. Now don't *fun* at each other like that. It is just such idle chatter that you don't mean that leads to wrangles." Mrs. Adair considered a moment. "Though I do notice now that you don't go to the band together this year, since it started, the way you used to do. You always go out alone."

"She's got her sweetheart to see," teased Ellen, and clicked her heels again.

Mrs. Adair made a playful pass at her younger daughter's frizzled and wavy hair.

But Louise took the remark seriously.

"I go up to the magazine-room, if you must know, in the Free Library, and look at the monthly magazines," she said.

Ellen realized that her sister spoke the truth.

"She's improving herself—for her sweetheart's sake!" she cried, and jumped up and flung her arms round Louise's neck. "Oh, does she want to be a fit and proper wife for a professor, then?" she asked.

Louise looked at her oddly.

"Well," she said, "you're never home till three o'clock, now. It's too late by the time you've fed and washed."

"Och, I know. I can't be bothered. The band's stale, anyhow," answered Ellen.

"Well, come along, tea's ready, you girls," said Mrs. Adair. "I've set it in the kitchen, for nobody's likely to come to-night."

On the next evening, for some reason, Louise did, after her shop closed, go along to Leith Street, expecting to arrive there when Ellen would be preparing to depart, and intending to walk home with her. As she passed Walker and Ray's, she looked into that interior of white-faced clocks, gleaming electroplate salvers, silver tea-urns, silver coffee-pots, candelabra, and candlesticks, twinkling in twinkling glass cases, and saw Jimmie standing in the middle of the shop, looking out broodingly on the jostling crowds in the street. His face brightened; and Louise stopped, as he walked to the door. He asked her if she would not come in.

"You're a great stranger," she said, following him beyond the tiled entranceway. "We haven't seen you for weeks."

"No. You see, my father has been advised to live out of town. He's taken a house at Eddlestone for six months. He goes by an early train. He's away already. After I lock up, I just have to run across to catch my train."

"Is your father not well?"

"He's ailing."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

Jimmie stroked his face, dug the ball of his thumb into one eye, into the other, in a gesture of one burdened and trying to refresh.

"How are you all?" he asked. "Mr. and Mrs. Adair well?"

"Yes, thank you. Very well."

"And Tom? And—er—your sister?"

Louise was not a dense maiden. She did not fail to note that Jimmie did not, or could not, speak the Christian name.

"Both well," she said.

"I've seen—er—Ellen go past," said he, "several times lately. But she never looks in; and I—er—I have always had a customer at the time."

Louise made no answer. She felt that she could say this, that, or the other; but she checked each sentence as it began to form, for silence seemed golden.

"Is she working?" asked Jimmie.

"Yes."

"Near here?"

"Well, yes—she's at Hyke's book-shop."

Jimmie's mouth opened slightly, then shut.

"Oh, yes," he said.

He looked out of the open door to the opposite side of the street, as if he looked through the wall there.

"Remember me to her, will you?" he said. "Tell her I was asking for her."

Mrs. Adair had taught the girls that only vulgar people used the phrase, "Tell her I was asking for her"; but Louise did not so much think that Jimmie was a vulgar young man, as that he was a very honest one. She could not have put words in order rightly to express her outlook, her new outlook; but perhaps it was a faint beginning of doubt in the worth of the balances in which the average people of Edinburgh weigh all things, a faint

doubt of these balances, that had come to her. The metal of the balances varies (to continue the simile) according to locality, or the caste of the weigher; for Edinburgh is the home of caste. The balances are, as it were, of tin, of bronze, of brass, of copper; but all bear the same stamp upon their undersides. Turn them over, and you read the word "Snobbery."

Somehow thus Louise considered, as she took Jimmie's hand and he gave her what is known as a warm and friendly grasp.

Further down the street, in Hyke's second-hand book-shop, while this strained conversation was in progress at Walker and Ray's, a man was holding forth a cutting from the *Scotsman*, and saying to Robb in scathing accents: "Isn't it amazing?"

Robb took the cutting. Ellen peeped at him, confident that he would not understand what he was asked to read, waiting to see his discomfiture and hear his non-committal reply; but John read the cutting, and then——

"Amazing, indeed," said he. "A brief review of Francis Thompson's *Selected Poems* that can find space for words about him"—he looked at the cutting—"passing 'to that peace which he had seldom, if ever, known on earth'—that is bad enough; but the rest! As for this regret that the volume does not contain—what does it say?—'that great outburst, the best-known of Thompson's writing, *The City of Dreadful Night*,' well! I'm a Scotsman myself, but this is a bad case of English bards and Scots reviewers."

Ellen perceived that John evidently understood the matter that had been put before him.

"Precisely," said the irate old man. "The reviewer does not even notice that the writer of *The City of Dreadful Night* spelt his name without a 'p.' "

"And that his Christian name was not Francis," remarked Robb.

Ellen was disgusted. What did it matter, anyhow? Everybody seemed to be becoming superior, she thought, even Louise. She was having a run of ill-luck of superior persons! The old man departed, with a gracious wave of his hand to Robb, who bowed in response.

Ellen tossed her head.

"Old fool!" she said. "Everybody knows that Edinburgh has the last word on everything—books, and pictures, and the theater. Why, no actor feels his reputation made—everybody knows that—till he's been well received in Edinburgh."

"Yes, that's so. They remember that Edinburgh hissed Henry Irving."

"Is that so? Well, then—that shows you!"

Hyke then entered; and, a few moments later, a girl in a trig costume, and tastefully shod, walked slowly past, looked down into the shop, turned, looked in again.

“There’s my sister at the door,” said Ellen.

“All right, all right,” said Hyke, not interested in her family. “If you are going somewhere together, you need not keep her waiting.”

“I’ll ask her in till I’m ready to go,” said Ellen.

“Oh, you can push off right away,” said he. “It’s nearly time, anyhow. Off you go.”

Ellen was annoyed that Louise did not come in. That was a half-hearted display of her “toneyness” to impress Robb. He seemed even less interested than Hyke to see how her sister looked.

CHAPTER XI

BUT ELLEN was to find a change before long.

John decided that there should be a certain amount of give and take in life, and that a man must look for the best in those with whom he is thrown in contact in his daily toil. Little, dry conversations, merely polite breakings of the silence, began to occur; and it struck him one day (schooling himself so, in his desire to be broad-minded) that this girl was not so bad, after all.

She had told him, soon after he came to the shop, that she really did not need to work. It came to him now, somehow or other, that there was more pathos than snobbery in the soul of his fair colleague. Her arching brows, her gray and blue and violet eyes, began to haunt him. She was in all probability, he decided, a really fine girl, in a narrow environment. Perhaps she really had to work, in spite of what she said, to help support a poor old mother! He had heard of such cases. Ellen's protestation that she did not *have* to work became almost touching to him. Of course she had to work, or else she would not stay in such a place as this—in the odor of Hyke's gin and brandy, that sullied even the wonders of the old folios. What could he do for her? She was beautiful, but alas! beauty is too often merely debauched by gross men.

Robb did not know the original *Don Quixote*. For himself, he came of a household in which books were slightly distrusted. An air of sanctity in his home, as in so many homes in his walk of life, cast a damp upon the pursuit of knowledge. He had had to feel his way among books. When the idea came to him to give Ellen some of his joy in the life of this book-shop, the joy that he still felt, despite Hyke's polluting hands, he was like a one-eyed man who leads the blind. The original *Don Quixote* he did not know, but he had read a little book by a Scotsman—John Buchan—a little book called *Sir Quixote of the Moors*, in which a Spaniard came to visit a Scottish friend, and found himself put in a difficult position in a lonely house on the high moors, all alone there with a lone lass. It was a book that had moved him immensely. The lone lass had been "trysted" to another; the Spaniard had been left to take care of her, and fell secretly in love with her, as she with him. The description of how the Spaniard (in his great hour) left the house of temptation, moved John Robb like a ballad.

He thought of *Sir Quixote of the Moors* now. He also thought of Stevenson's David Balfour alone with Catriona in the Low Countries. He had no friend to deride his folly, no friend to tell him that even his idolized Stevenson would have laughed him out of looking with such extreme sentimental tenderness upon that episode. His people at home had objected to his reading of Stevenson's work at all, because they had read in the gossip-column of a weekly paper that he was a lover of vagabonds, and had even been seen in Princes Street, carrying a chair on his head. So John had had to read even Stevenson by stealth. According to bookselling statistics, there is more reading done in Scotland than in any part of the British Isles; but there are also in Scotland many families over which hangs the curse of Calvin and a misconceived Christ. The children of such families, if they love beauty, either love it very tenderly, with a minor key in their voices, or are carried off their feet, and are as moths round a candle.

As his people desired to treat the heathen, so did John now desire to treat Ellen. Truly, it was no hopeful task. But it was his place, his duty, to do what he could. He had a deal to condone in this blind beauty. One day he had to go to Morningside with a parcel of books, and, on his return, with another to Goldenacre. Hyke was out all the while, and Ellen told John—when he came back—laughing at the humor of it, that she had had a great time. No less than five customers had come in to ask for books, and to each she had replied: "I'm sorry, I have not a copy." Each of the five had assured her that she had, and had asked permission to take the desired volume, for himself, from the window.

"But why," said John, "did you tell them we did not have copies?"

"Why shouldn't I?" she asked. "Hyke ought to look after his business when you're out. I'm not a shop-assistant."

Robb, in pursuit of leniency and breadth, just succeeded in deciding that perhaps she was right. She was not a shop-assistant; she was the typist. And though there was now no typing to be done, nothing for her to do but sit and eat chocolates, her argument was perhaps right. It was her environment that was wrong. She evidently came of a dead family, but somewhere within her, he was sure, there must be beauty.

He made a point of showing her "beautiful" books, "beautiful" bindings, "beautiful" title-pages, "beautiful" printing. Ellen, wondering what he was after, looked at everything he showed her, in gentle and confiding fashion, always preferring that he should hold the "beautiful" object, instead of taking it from him, leaning her slim little biceps against his arm, looking with soft and shining eyes at whatever he held forth to her. He thought she

began to look prettier. Also, he felt more at ease, more in tune with humanity; and he was employed upon a fine mission!

But Ellen was no *ignoramus* in certain matters. She knew a few proverbs, such as, "It's love that makes the world go round," and "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," and "Pity is akin to love." It dawned upon her, one day, that this "sumph," this "queer comic," pitied her, and life began to have again its attractions for her.

It was at this point that the Saint Anthony epoch of Robb's life with Ellen began. Now did she commence her subtle seduction of him—riposte to his veiled evangelical campaign. Her laugh, her pressing arm, her hair sweeping his cheek, as she looked at the things of "beauty," now began to tell him that he was a serious owl, and that "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," and such refrains, held the real secret of life.

An exquisite little copy of Herrick became John's companion; the "tempestuous petticoats" of Herrick's damsels grew more dear to him than "the heavens' embroidered cloths," and Ellen did not now ever think of chucking the job. The tide had turned, the sumph was proving game, and Fortune favored her.

Hyke absented himself more and more, customers were fewer, John grew more bemused; and after some weeks of Ellen's arm pressing his, of her beautiful hair occasionally tickling his cheek, she had further proof of the invincible rightness of her simple faith, when, one day, they being, like Paolo and Francesca, over a book, John's arm encircled her waist. She turned her head to look in his eyes, and it came upon her that he was in love. "Helen" or "Ellen," "Thomson" or "Thompson," old Irish love-songs, all were meaningless knowledge. Edinburgh now meant no dead men's songs to John Robb, no dead Prince's tramlings; and no echo of the Jacobite huzzas lingered in the High Street. He had told her of these things sometimes. Edinburgh meant Ellen, and Robb learnt that he had been an egoist. He had tried to convert the heathen—and the heathen were splendid. To his eyes she became prettier; he had now only a few regrets that his idol could be thoughtless at times.

Ellen began to study fresh poses before the wardrobe-mirror, to bend her neck to the plate-glass windows of Princes Street shops. The covers of the more successful magazines, with their heads of the Eternal Feminine, were not lost upon her. A long-haired designer of posters, strolling on Princes Street one morning, irritable from lack of ideas, raised his head, and half closed his eyes, to examine her contours, with keen observation of her mercantile possibilities—pictorially.

At last Robb began to see again that his idol had, as he thought, feet of clay; and then came a spell of wet weather—and goloshes. He was in an excited quandary. One part of him hoped that no brute man would take advantage of the innocence of this radiant nymph, another part tried to repel a suggestion that Ellen was as those sirens whose strange fame made Odysseus, desiring to hear them singing, give orders to his sailors to tie him to the mast, before, their ears stopped with wax, they bore the ship within earshot of the perilous shore.

Looking up, as she was preparing to leave, Ellen found Robb regarding her.

“Fancy us being all alone in the shop like this all day,” she said, and rose with a swirl.

He made no answer; merely stood looking at her, as one very thoughtful. With dancing steps she turned and passed into the alcove to rear.

“Gracious! My hair does look wild!” she said from within. “I say—just fancy us being all alone like this all day.”

“What of it?” said John.

“The last assistant tried to take liberties with me,” she answered, “one day when no customers were coming in, and Hyke was out for hours. But *he* wasn’t a gentleman.”

As no answer was forthcoming, she looked round the corner.

“But—he—was—a—married man,” said Robb, in horror. “A bookseller in town asked me to subscribe toward a little gift for his wife. I was told he was a married man.”

“Oh, yes, he was,” replied Ellen; and her head tossed. “*That* didn’t make any difference.”

“He must have been a pig!” said John.

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Ellen, indignant at the suggestion that her charms should have had no fascination for Evans, the old resentment against the superior Robb springing to life.

John turned his back and walked slowly down the shop, hands in pockets.

“Funny world,” he remarked, slowly. “Wonder if that electrician was a married man.”

Ellen looked after him with rage.

“If you give *me* any of your old gas——” she began.

At this juncture entered Hyke, breathing the fumes of ale, gin, cigars, and garlic.

"You can go, Miss Adair—oh, I see you're ready. All right," he said.

He leant against a bookcase, hat on back of head, flabby hand behind him for a cushion; and as he leant there, beaded with perspiration, he blew long funnels of smoke from his lips, one after another, in a deliberate, slow, calculating fashion.

Ellen, lithe and radiant, swept down the shop.

"Good-night, Mr. Hyke," she said.

"Good-night," Hyke responded.

John Robb looked after the retreating typist with a brief rage, followed by a great contempt. Then he was aware of his employer's gaze upon him, leering, sidewise, as if he stood there grossly considering the domestic economy of the little second-hand book-shop in diplomatic silence. The odor of gin reeked on the beloved tomes; and John Robb, being a burner of boats, turned to Jerry Hyke.

"Mr. Hyke," he said, "I'm very sorry, but I wish to give you my resignation."

"Anything wrong?"

"No."

"Anything wrong with me?"

"No. I—er—I simply wish to leave without any explanation, if you don't mind."

"Any trouble with Miss Adair?" Hyke asked.

"Not the slightest. I'm going back to Glasgow."

"Oh, all right," said Hyke, and winked a slow, deliberate wink.

During the next days, his manner unchanged, but his suspicions aroused, he kept an eye upon his two employees. He noticed that they did not speak to each other. Now and again, strolling to and fro in his shop, he would pause, hands in pockets, twirling his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other, and think: "I wonder if that young fellow has been trying to get round about Miss Adair?" Then he would turn his great, ungainly form half round, and stare at her long, out of the corner of his eyes. Ellen usually looked away. Once she tried to meet the look, and Hyke said: "I'll have some work for you presently, Miss; new catalogue."

Two days before Robb was to leave, while that young man was out, Hyke lumbered toward Ellen and looked down at her, leaning against a low bookcase beside her desk.

"Robb say anything to you about leaving?" he asked.

She went on clipping out the descriptions of books from sheets that she had typed in the morning.

“I’m not speaking to Mr. Robb,” she said.

She knew that Hyke was fishing, that he suspected she was to blame for John’s resignation. To herself she thought: “Leaving! Well, he knows where he stands. Why, he’s running away, the sumph!”

There was a great hilarity in her heart. She was well aware that, though young men assistants can be dismissed for attempting to be familiar with young lady assistants, for some reason young lady assistants are never dismissed for “having on” the young men. She continued to work, her face expressionless, and Hyke knew that he would never find out from her the reason for Robb’s sudden flight from Edinburgh.

“Pretty necklace that you got on,” he remarked.

She looked at him coyly under her arching brows.

CHAPTER XII

THEY were alone together now, Ellen and Mr. Hyke, the great, gross Hyke, with his heavy, stained mustache. His new catalogue was ready; but he delayed the posting of it, because of a widespread lull in book-buying, due, so said the booksellers, to some political movements that made those who had formerly had money to spend on books desist from further purchases until they could see ahead a little more clearly. According to the summing-up of the conversations of the booksellers (when they met about town, or dropped in at each other's shops), the classes whose voices were being hearkened to by the politicians of the hour were not those that had any interest in old folios, quartos, and duodecimos. The quest even of the cheap reprint was as foreign to them as the quest of the rare first edition. They preferred the Special Football Edition. The discussing booksellers (of all shades of political opinion, so perhaps there was something in their contention) maintained that the buyers of books were timid because of what is called "the political situation."

That belief, at any rate, was strong enough to restrain booksellers from sending out their catalogues. They awaited the better day. Even casual buyers (as apart from those who ordered books from catalogues posted to them) were few; customers grew more scarce, in the Leith Street shop, than old men wanting to sell a pair of laces, or young men offering to sell boxes of matches and trying to steal books from the outside stall when none were purchased. Hyke smoked fewer cigars, and made resolves of amendment and attention to business when business should again come his way.

He assured Ellen that despite the depression in trade, he was making search for another assistant. He clung to the shop assiduously, to attend to the occasional buyers or inquirers, or to chivvy away book-snatchers. But after a few days, the outlook being still gloomy, he began to worship again, and pour libation, at the shrine of Bacchus, considering that he did not suffer alone, but that all "the trade" was glum. Telling Ellen he would be back in half-an-hour, he departed many times—and broke his word, returning two hours later, instead, and groggy. But Ellen liked his witticisms when he was in that state, and she fervently hoped that Mrs. Adair might not be moved to call for a personal inspection of the shop where her daughter worked.

Ellen continued to have but the one phrase for any chance customer: "I'm sorry we haven't a copy at present." Even one with small claim to the title of prophet could have seen trouble ahead. But Ellen, aiding Hyke toward destruction, thought that if he wanted her to attend to customers he ought to pay her more. True, young Robb had worked for twenty-five shillings a week, with love; but he was an idiot. At any rate, to attend to customers was beneath her dignity.

Her mother agreed with this view, when, in the evenings, in response to the many questions about her life during the day, she was forced to tell a little. Mrs. Adair also advised her to look out for a new situation.

"It isn't good for you to be in a place like that, where there is so little for you to do," she said.

Ellen assured Mrs. Adair that Hyke said business would improve soon.

"I'll stay on," she added, "and see what happens."

But Hyke was variable as the weather. Some days he was in the shop for hours, all day long; and anon, just when one might think he had decided to be a shopkeeper, off he went. His attention to work was spasmodic. He would atone for two days of close attention to the occasional customers, arranging of shelves, dictating of book-titles and descriptions, by a whole subsequent afternoon in a public-house, going out as soon as Ellen returned from lunch, and coming back again just before six o'clock, to assure her thickly that he could lock up, and she might as well go home now.

To be paid for doing next to nothing continued to have its attractions for her. A salary of thirty shillings a week for saying six to a dozen times a day, "I'm sorry we have not a copy," was not to be lightlied. Sometimes she was too quick with her stereotyped phrase.

"But you have a copy in the window," would be the response.

"Oh, have I? I thought it was sold," she would say; and having made no attempt to comprehend what book had been asked for, she would add: "Will you please point it out?" After considerable difficulty, the purchaser would extract the desired volume for himself and look in the left corner of the cover to see the price, receive Ellen's thanks for his kindness, and depart, wondering what manner of shop this was into which he had stumbled.

The climax was reached when Hyke returned from swilling ale to find a young man leaning on a cane, legs crossed, bending toward Ellen—in his shop!—and toying with her necklace. Hyke stood glaring. He would have glared more malignantly had he known that Ellen had never seen the young man till that day. Standing at the door, looking out at the traffic on the street, she had simply seemed attractive to him as he lounged past, and had

responded to an ogle he offered her in such a way as to make him halt and enter. From a preliminary request for an invented book of nonsensical title, to this toying with her necklace, had been a mere series of giggling give-and-take.

When Hyke entered, he calmly examined him from head to toe.

“Well, sir, what can I do for you?” said Hyke.

“Who are you?” asked the stranger.

“I’m the proprietor of this shop.”

“Oh, you are! By-by,” said the young man, and strolled out.

Ellen sniggered—and waited for Hyke to act. But Hyke did not act. He was another masculine puzzle.

“You’d better go to the bank,” said he; and Ellen, thinking what a gay world it was, made haste and set forth.

As she walked up Leith Street she saw a familiar back across the street. Evans stood there, looking in a clothier’s window. The sight of him made her toss her head more triumphantly, added to the growing sense she had of the glamour she cast on the world.

She came into Princes Street, past the Register House, quick enough upon the heels of her young man of the cool manners to be seen by him as he strolled along that thoroughfare, looking this way and that. His calm effrontery, his nonchalance before Hyke, delighted Ellen; and when he saw her, and with a “Hullo!” greeted her, and invited her to tea, she accepted with a happy laugh.

He accompanied her to the bank, and, her duty there accomplished, refreshed her with strawberries and cream, tea and *éclair*s, on a balcony of Princes Street. He made (when tea was over, and Ellen thought at last that she “really must go”) no urgent request to see her again. He merely strolled back to the corner of Leith Street with her, and assured her, holding her hand, that he would see her again.

“I’ll see you again,” he said, in a very definite voice, so that the words haunted. “I don’t know whether to call you Cleopatra or Helen,” he added.

She noted his pronunciation. She recalled, dimly, that it was thus Robb pronounced Helen—Helen of what-was-it? Anyhow, she decided that *Helen* was, after all, “toney.”

“You may call me Helen,” she said, “if you’re good.”

Feeling that Fortune was with her, and that life was very rosy, she came flaunting into Hyke’s—and saw, to her consternation, Charles Evans upon a ladder. Evans! It was impossible. Her eyes must be playing her false. She

must be light-headed. No, there was Evans, high on a ladder, arranging books on a top shelf; and Hyke, at the foot, turned to see who entered. That picture, for a moment, made all that had happened since the day she came first down these steps and saw Hyke standing so, foot on a rung of the ladder, and Evans atop it, seem as a dream. She stood stock-still. She stared aghast. Hyke cleared his throat quickly and sniffed, and looked up to see how Evans was progressing.

The explanation was that Evans, in terrible financial straits (with all that which is called “proper pride” sucked and beaten out of him), had been on the lookout for Ellen’s departure to the bank, and had rushed into the shop as soon as she was fairly gone, to beg Hyke—who was, after all, he believed, not such a bad sort—for half-a-crown, sixpence, anything.

“What do you want it for?” Hyke had asked. “You have a cheek coming to see me, you know.”

“You can see it’s not for drink, sir.”

“No, it doesn’t look as if you were drinking,” said Hyke. “It doesn’t look as if you were eating much, either. I say, would you care to come back?”

“Eh?”

“Care to come back?”

“But you—you remember——”

“Oh! The man I had after you, went too—over her also, I think, by the look of things; and I’ve had my eye on her, I’ve seen little things. Did she, Evans, ever show you her legs when she put on her goloshes?”

“By God, she did!”

“Evans, my boy, my hungry boy, we’re all human. You can come back if you like, so long as you keep off the booze. I prefer booze to women, myself; I’m a one-vice man.”

“I’ll come, sir, like a shot. I’ll begin now. But what about——”

“About the young lady typist, eh? Leave that to me. See, start in now. I’ll give you half-a-quid in advance, to-night, same as I did before. I’ve been neglecting business a bit, and I’m going to get into it again. You can write the catalogue for me—it will be slower, but that will do. It will have fewer mistakes, anyhow.”

Thus it was that Ellen received her shock, on returning, and she had no inspiration how to act. Hyke relieved her, put a period to her stunned, stationary attitude.

“You’ve taken quite a while to get back from the bank. Bank’s been shut over an hour. Been window-gazing, eh? Women in business must have

freedom, I suppose! I don't think there is any more for you to do to-night," said he, after that preliminary scene. "You don't need to hang on. You can go off early. You can go now!"

With solemn aspect Ellen went over to her table, to see that she left no belongings lying there. Then she looked at herself in the cracked mirror that hung in the niche at the rear of the shop, and saw that she had gone pale.

She waited there, looking at her face in the mirror, till courage returned; and then, swinging her shoulders slightly, and tossing her head, she tip-tapped, nonchalant again, and gay, to the door, listening for Hyke to bid her good-night. But he said nothing. She strutted on, he watching her. Just at the door she looked over her shoulder.

"Good-afternoon!" she called.

Hyke made no response. She stood a moment, indignant.

"Good-afternoon!" she said, loud and defiant.

"There you are, Evans—Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, Buchanan's *Sermons*, on the second shelf. There's room for them there," said Hyke, handing the volumes to his returned assistant.

"Toodooloo!" said Ellen, and swept up the two steps.

CHAPTER XIII

ELLEN'S mind ran all on a young man of five feet nine, attired in advance of the fashion. He seemed a collected young man. He had gay, twinkling eyes, that showed gray and green. They had the effect of making her aware of a hilarity, or an abandon, in herself. She saw no sign of cunning in them, as some did; and their slight, slanting elongation, that occasionally gave them an Eastern cast, made them seem more fascinating to her.

"He's a darling," she considered, as she marched through the throng at the head of Waverley Steps, where the hawkers cried out, "Diary! Murray's Diary! Diary!" or "Roses! Roses!"

She turned the corner at Waverley Market, smiling to herself, all upon her Romeo. The deep-chested chant of "Laces, a penny a pair!" of a blind man, who sat on a piece of carpet on the parapet, his back against the railings, startled her for a moment out of her dream, for she passed close to the man, almost brushing his knees, as she swept downhill toward the Old Town.

It was still bright, the month of June being come. Americans, their trip to Roslin or the Forth Bridge over, were stretching their legs slowly in Princes Street, and returning to their hotels. There was a loud din of rattling wheels over the hard cobbles of the street when cabs and lorries turned out of Princes Street toward Cockburn Street. Round the carriage-exit of the station, gamins fought and sparred, heedless of the passers-by, who had to step carefully to avoid trampling on their bare toes. But they seemed as carefree as the fat sparrows that rose and fell and undulated in crowds among the parterres at the base of the Scott Monument. Trains came from under the bridge; for this street, into which Ellen turned from the main thoroughfare, is but a bridge over the end of a railway-station that once boasted the greatest expanse of glass roofs of any in the world. The white coils of steam rose in the glittering evening, and led the eye up to the tranquillity of the sky, with the Castle on its crags showing an impressive sky-line, with fascinating little peeps of sky through spaces here and there.

Ellen saw none of this, merely swung on, citizen of one of the most picturesque cities in the world—as she was always prepared to agree and declaim. As she began to ascend the steps to Saint Giles Street, she was

brought, irritated, out of the day-dream of the young man of the tea on the balcony, by dirty-faced, dirty-legged, ragged urchins, who, in a broken ring, danced gayly, singing rimes older than Edinburgh. The elderly “sumph,” whose neck she had once flipped with her scarf, would have paused in a pottering attitude, his face wreathed in smiles, to have heard those children chant, given them each a penny, without telling them why, lest they might become self-conscious and turn their unconscious knowledge of the classic children’s rimes into a base money-making scheme.

Ellen broke the dirty ring as she passed on. Her heart was surely sound, by the way she took that long ascent of stone steps to Saint Giles Street, with no pause on the half-way landing for breath, as the manner of some is. She felt forceful, heedless of others, determined to enjoy life, that opened fresh vistas before her. Hyke and the book-shop were secondary matters to Ellen. She had decided not to return to the shop, of course; time enough to construct replies in response to the inevitable parental questions. For the moment, her world was to her just this masterful young man and levity of heart.

Partly with the quick breaths that she took at the very end of the ascent, partly with emotion, remembering how her admirer of to-day had held her hand and said, “I’ll see you again,” while he looked deep in her eyes, she came to the level of the Old Town, with a swelling of her rounded bosom. She must see him again! She felt a gripping dread lest she might not. Then she believed she had a premonition that she would. It was a premonition of “sport”—“fun.” She had met a man who was “game” in the most fascinating way.

Swinging along, with tapping heels, she passed the High Street, the Free Library, the book-shops of George IV Bridge, smiling ahead when men looked at her, irritated when they passed unheeding.

“It’s *you*, Ellen!” said Mrs. Adair, opening to her, when she arrived at Crown Street. “You’re early.”

“Yes; I’ve left.”

“Left!”

“Left Hyke’s.”

“Left Hyke’s?”

“Yes, I’ve left Hyke’s. I wasn’t treated properly.” She withdrew the pins from her hat.

“Has he insulted you?” asked Mrs. Adair. “Come into the kitchen and tell me.”

“He’s been very rude.”

“Rude? I should have come down and seen him when you took the situation, but you were so thrawn, and I thought you were of an age——”

“Och, I can look after myself.”

“That’s what I felt. I had trained you. But tell me about it.”

“He drinks,” said Ellen.

“Drinks! And you alone in the shop with him! Did he insult you?”

“You wouldn’t have me,” Ellen asked, “go on working with a man who stays out for hours, leaving me to attend to customers, and then comes in stinking with drink, and—and makes vulgar remarks, says vulgar things?”

“This is terrible! This is what comes of women going out into the world. Men are shocking, sometimes, I know. There’s one thing about your father—he’s the cleanest-minded man. But tell me, did you walk out, dear? How did you leave? What did he do?”

“He was just drunk again—that’s all.”

“Again! He’s been like it before?”

“Often.”

“Often!”

Mrs. Adair’s tone seemed changing to reproach of Ellen.

“Och, yes,” said Ellen.

“Why didn’t you tell me? I’m sure you knew that if your father heard of this he would have said, ‘Leave at once.’ Why didn’t you tell us?”

Ellen’s eyelids drooped.

“I thought I would be able to continue,” she said. “I knew that a girl going out to business would see things—I didn’t want to throw up the first situation I got.”

“Oh, my dear! That has been what’s making you look—different. Your father even remarked upon it, the other night, in his own way. ‘Do you think Ellen is all right in that shop?’ he said. ‘She seems getting different.’”

“Maybe I’ve shown it,” Ellen answered, worried. “I didn’t know. How did I show it?”

“Father said you seemed excited, and he felt as if you were keeping something from us that we should know. Oh, my lass, I’m very glad you’ve told me. You shouldn’t have gone on so long—it’s fine of you. But, to begin with, you’re fit for better things than a book-shop, a second-hand book shop, too. I’m sure you remember my qualms when I heard of the place. If it hadn’t been for remembering what Mr. Lane said about style——”

“I’ll get my things off,” said Ellen.

They had been standing in the kitchen, face to face, talking, and now Ellen walked off to her bedroom and cast her hat on the bed. Her mother followed her, feeling there was still much to ask. Ellen stood before the dressing-table, arranging her hair.

“Did you just walk out, or did you demand your salary?” asked Mrs. Adair.

Ellen’s lips came together. She frowned.

“I didn’t demean myself by mentioning salary,” she said. “I just walked out.”

“Well, you must get that—not for the sake of the money, but for justice and your rights. I know your father will say—— Oh, there’s Louise’s knock.”

She retired, to answer the tapping summons, and Ellen heard her say: “Hullo, both of you!”

“Yes, we met on the Mound,” she heard Louise answer. “What a lovely evening! You should see the Gardens.”

“It’s that new head gardener the City’s got,” said Tom, heavy man of affairs. “He sees to the laying-out of the gardens—takes a personal pride in them. What’s the matter with you, mother?”

Ellen made her appearance, coming out of the bedroom.

“Hullo!” from Louise. “Home!”

“Hullo!” from Tom, and he looked at his younger sister thoughtfully.

“Tell them,” said Mrs. Adair.

“What is it?” asked Louise, drawing off her gloves.

The women moved into the front room.

“I’ve chucked the job. I’ve left Hyke’s.”

“You have!” said Louise. “Well, from the glimpse I had of him, when I came down to meet you the other night, I’m not sorry.”

Mrs. Adair looked quickly at her elder daughter, turned almost sharply on her.

“You felt that?” she cried. “Why did you say nothing? I am sure you know your father——”

“Ellen said Hyke was all right,” answered Louise, “not as bad as he looked, at all. I’m not surprised though, Ellen,” she added, “having seen him. It was only a glimpse I had, but he seemed a queer man to be associated with books.”

Tom, having hung up his straw hat and thrust his walking-stick into the stand, followed the women heavily, and stared at Ellen.

“He was drunk, really drunk to-day,” Ellen said. “I’ve seen him slightly excited before, but this was too much; so I put my hat on and walked out.”

“I’ll go and put the kettle on,” Mrs. Adair interjected. “You’ll all want your tea. We’ve been talking and not thinking of time,” and away she fussed to the kitchen.

“I’ll do it for you,” said Louise. “I think you are very wise, Ellen,” and off she went also.

“Aye, aye!” muttered Tom. He continued to stare at Ellen. “Was he very drunk?”

“Och, horrible!”

“Who was yon fellow I saw you with?”

“Saw me with? Where?”

“On the tea-shop balcony.”

“Where were you?”

“Never mind.”

“I didn’t see you.”

“I was on the top of a car. I had been out on business to Tollcross. Who was yon young fellow?”

“He’s a customer of Hyke’s. Anything else?”

“Is he? A funny customer, yon. I saw you——”

“Och, shut up! Here’s mother.”

“Come along, come along, you two. What are you whispering about? Now, Tom, don’t you meddle—no talk about going down and punching Mr. Hyke’s head. Ellen, you and I will go down right away, after tea. We’ll get there before he shuts. I should have gone before, to see what kind of a shop it was, and what kind of company you had. It might have made Hyke more careful.”

“You’ll only make a scene,” Ellen objected.

“No, I’ll be very quiet and dignified. I’ll let him understand, however. Now come and have tea.”

During tea, the subject was dismissed—that is, from conversation. But from Mrs. Adair’s very proper manner, erect bearing, ruffling movements, it was evident she was letting Hyke see that he had been impolite to one member of a family of some worth. Tom munched in silence, looking at his

plate, and stealing occasional glances at Ellen. Louise sipped her tea and glanced at Tom now and then.

“You’re quiet, Tom,” she remarked.

“Eh? Oh, I’m like the dumb sailor’s parrot—I think a lot,” he responded.

A key was thrust in the front door, and turned.

“Here’s your father,” said Mrs. Adair, and Ellen felt trepidation and anger, for the “your” seemed not collective. It was her father, in particular, who came home then.

Tom rose as the old man entered, surrendering his chair with a stolidly uttered “I’m finished.”

“I’ll just give my hands a wash at the sink first,” said Mr. Adair. “It feels as if we were getting home early, with these light nights coming on.”

He washed his hands, dried them on a towel that hung by the side of the sink, and turned, rubbing them together gayly, and all beaming, with a rejuvenated air, smiling and saying, “Ha, ha!”

“Father’s got something up his sleeve,” said Louise.

“I have something in my pocket, which is better,” he answered.

“What is it, father?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“I’ll give you a guess.”

“I can’t guess,” said Mrs. Adair. “In your pocket? Feel it there, on your side, Louise.”

“Na, na, not in my pocket yet, but will be,” explained the old man.

“Now we’re getting warm,” Ellen cried out, in an attempt at ease.

“What can it be?” Louise murmured.

“It’s to come to me on Friday night,” Mr. Adair went on, as he drew his chair closer to the table.

“Warmer still!” said Louise.

“Oh, tell me, father!” urged Mrs. Adair, in a voice playfully petulant. “I’ll not give you the poached eggs till you tell me!”

“I’ve had a rise in ma salary.”

“Never!” cried Ellen.

“To begin this week—seven-and-six of a rise,” said Mr. Adair. “The boss took me aside to-day and spoke very nicely about being pleased with me, and how highly I was respected. It was very gratifying, and all the better for not having been asked for. Hullo, what’s wrong? There’s something *you* have to tell *me*, mother.”

“That’ll keep. We’ll not worry you just now. There! Louise will see to your tea. Come along, Ellen. We’re going out, Ellen and me. We’ll not be long.”

“But what is it? It’s something wrong. I ’sure you I can’t eat my tea till I hear.”

“Go on, Ellen, get on your hat,” said Mrs. Adair. “It is just that Ellen has had to leave Hyke’s. He’s been drinking. She didn’t mention it before, in the hope that he might amend; but to-night she had to come away, and she’s not going back.”

“Oho! You should have told us, Ellen. I could have gone down and seen him. Did ye give him your week’s notice when ye left? Ye are paid weekly—ye have to give a week’s notice.”

“She’s not going back,” said Mrs. Adair.

“No, no, of course not; but there’s the justice of the thing. I’ll go down and see him, and say that I can’t have my lass in a shop where there’s such unpleasantness. I’ll be circumspect; I’ll not implicate anybody, but he’ll understand why she isn’t coming back.”

“There’s no need for either of you to go down,” said Ellen. “I could write and say I wasn’t coming back, and tell him to send my three days’ wages—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.”

“Now, wait a minute.” Mr. Adair considered thoughtfully. “I’m not sure that that course of action would be legal. No, I think one of us should go down. But tell me this, was he rude? I mean, was he flagrantly rude, anything——”

“He was just intoxicated,” answered Mrs. Adair. “That’s it, isn’t it, Ellen?”

Ellen nodded.

“He’s often been,” she said, “but to-day I couldn’t stand it. It came to a head to-day. I hate the place. I’m not going back.”

“There’s no question of that,” her father agreed. “But wait now, till I think. I think I’d better go down. You see, I’ll be diplomatic——”

“No, no, father,” said Mrs. Adair. “I’ve got my good dress on, as you see, and I’ll put my best hat and coat on, and just walk in with Ellen.”

“But maybe he’ll be drunker now.”

“Well, what can he do if he is? It’s an open shop; and if he is, it will only make the state of affairs clearer that Ellen can’t stay. And I’ll be very dignified, so that when we come out he’ll have something to think over, and he’ll be a humble man for some time to come.”

“Well, let me know if he’s in the slightest degree objectionable, and I’ll go down and see him in the morning. Will ye get down before he shuts?”

“I don’t think we can,” said Ellen.

But her father looked up at her with what, from him, was almost sharpness, then; so she made no further objection. She and her mother started off.

For haste’s sake they cut down to Clerk Street, and boarded a Liberton and Post Office car, bound cityward, Mrs. Adair sitting very erect, looking down her nose at all things and people—at old strewed tickets on the floor (for people persist in ignoring the printed request to put discarded tickets in the box at the rear of the car), at the other occupants of the car, at the long line of shops that the car crawled past. Down the vista of Canongate she looked with rustling intolerance. Ellen thought her mother would create an impression on Hyke, might wholly silence him, so that he would say nothing that might make her at all doubtful of her daughter’s veracity. But when they reached Leith Street the book-shop was closed.

“Ah, well,” Mrs. Adair commented, restraining any peevish words of annoyance, “it is a journey for nothing, but another day is coming.”

They turned back.

“Here’s Walker and Ray’s, Ellen.” She looked at the iron shutters, the iron door. “A jeweler’s shop, of course, does close early. You never see James, do you, when you’re coming and going?”

“No, I’ve never seen him once all the time I’ve been here.”

“I wonder what he would think of the conduct of his near neighbor!” Mrs. Adair exclaimed.

“Oh, he’d be horrified,” said Ellen lightly.

“I should think he would,” the mother responded.

When they returned to Crown Street, with news of their disappointment, Mr. Adair seemed rather pleased to hear it. He said nothing, merely asked, “Well?” was told of the closed door, and said: “Aye, aye. I was afraid it would be so. But never mind, we’ll consider it till to-morrow.”

In the morning he announced that he had been thinking about what he called, vaguely, “yon,” during the night, and felt it was his duty to go and see Hyke personally.

“My boss will let me off for an hour,” he said. “I’ll tell him it’s private business I have to attend to.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Adair, “perhaps it would be right for you to see him, acting right toward Ellen. You know what to say.”

Ellen was somewhat perturbed, but a sudden return of abandon aided her to bear the suspense that the day promised to have in store for her. After all, she had her adorer of the ultra-fashionable attire and the cool manner, one with great capacity held in waiting for being “game.” Visions of him made her gay and buoyant, as she spent the forenoon arranging drawers, tidying, looking at herself in the glass, singing snatches of song, with a surging sense in her of the exciting glamour of life.

CHAPTER XIV

*M*R. ADAIR's employer was perfectly willing.

"Certainly, certainly, Adair," he said; "half-an-hour—an hour, if you want."

"Thank you, sir. It's just some business I have to see to."

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" For the old man looked worried, unstrung.

"Oh, no, sir; just a little bit of business to attend to."

"That's all right. Don't rush it."

"I'll look back again before I go to dinner."

"Just arrange for yourself."

So old Adair started out from the shop in Shandwick Place. He had the entire length of Princes Street to traverse, to reach Leith Street, but as he had found long since that if one takes care of the pennies, then the pounds, if they do not (as the latter half of the proverb says) take care of themselves, do at any rate gather, he ignored the cars, seeing that his employer had been so agreeable. Twelve penny car-rides done without made a shilling, and two shillings and a half-shilling made half-a-crown, and four half-crowns made half-a-sovereign—and a sovereign was a pound! It's wonderful how money mounts up. So he walked.

It was five minutes to twelve, by the clock on the diminutive "island" at the West End. Gazing women were already twining before Maule's windows at the corner. In trying to evade the crowd, Mr. Adair was smitten with a sense of his own meanness. All these voices told him that he was one of the menial classes. He felt he should rub one hand round the other, as he circumvented the throng. The voices, and the odors—blent patchouli and opopanax—and the rustle, were intimidating to a man who wore a false shirt, a dicky, a little heart-shaped piece of starched linen affixed to his rough shirt by the top stud. He felt the dicky through his waistcoat, to make sure it had not shifted; for sometimes it did. It had a knack of sagging to the side and showing a bit of the coarse, genuine shirt below. Sometimes, even, if he did not remember to see to it now and then, it would slip round so far as to cause one side of the heart-shaped top to pop out of his waistcoat altogether. He had once arrived home with it protruding so, in that careless condition, and his wife had to draw his attention to the fact. "Oh, father, look

at your dicky! Have you come home all the way like that?" He felt that brief apology for a starch-fronted shirt now. It was in place. But the long ribbon of people before him, far as eye could see, from east unto west, made him feel shy.

A double row of boarding-school misses passed him. He looked at their little chins, their pretty little faces; he heard their voices, the voices of the children of these people who came into his employer's shop to criticize wall-papers, and for whom, if he happened to be near the door, he had to open it and bend his head—the voices of the people whom his wife tried to look like, and into whose world she hoped, before she died, to see both her daughters pass in holy wedlock. He preferred to speak Scots. He was happier with people who, meeting, saluted with, "Hoo are ye the day?"—"Ah'm fine, man! And hoo's yersel'?"

After two blocks had been passed, he found the ordeal lessen. There were others abroad as well as the people before whom he felt like a worm. As for Mr. Hyke—as for the meeting with Mr. Hyke, he had no trepidation regarding that. For, mean though Adair was, he had his shreds of manliness. If he was somewhat of a weakling in the world, so was he at home. He was not weakling in the world and brave at home. He was weakling in both places; and when he turned, if ever he were to turn, he would hit out, not in. If ever bitterness came on top of his subjugated state, he would keep his bitterness under, in Crown Street.

Where was this man's shop? Where was the shop of the drunken pig? Here it was: "J. Hyke, Second-Hand Books."

Mr. Adair went carefully down the two steps, and saw a big, ugly man, talking to someone who was evidently a customer. A younger man scrutinized Adair from the rear of the shop, put down some books he held, and advanced, scanning the old man's clothes.

"Yes?" asked this assistant.

"I want to speak to Mr. Hyke. Is that Mr. Hyke over there?"

"Yes. He'll be disengaged presently."

"All right," and Adair nodded brusquely.

After all, he had a man and a boy under him where he worked, and he knew how to talk to underlings! He said "All right!" in the way that he talked to the under-porter, who sometimes took a glass too much and apologized for doing so the morning after. Mr. Adair's heart gave a catch, however, as he waited; so he put a clenched fist on either hip, and scowled—to prevent his lip from twitching. It pained him to think that Ellen had had to

take orders from that dissipated-looking man. The customer to whom Hyke attended walked to the door, Hyke accompanying him half-way thither.

Adair noticed that Hyke was civil of manner to the customer, but by no means fawning. When Hyke turned back, the assistant, who had gone on with his work while the old man waited, made the comment:

“To see you, sir.”

Hyke put hands lightly on hips also, and bowed.

“To see me, sir?” he said.

“Yes. I’m Mr. Adair. I have called to——”

“Oh, yes; just a minute,” said Hyke.

He waddled behind the counter, took up an envelope that lay on a bookcase there, waddled back, and extended it to Mr. Adair, who accepted it, but looked at it dubiously. On it was written: “Fifteen shillings—half-week’s salary.”

“That’s what you want, I presume?” asked Hyke.

The two men stood looking at each other, Hyke slightly bent. Adair held the envelope and considered.

“How did you know she wasn’t coming back?” he asked.

“Well,” Hyke stroked his loose jaw, “let me see, now. Knowledge of the world, I expect.”

Another long pause.

“If she had come back, what would you have done?”

“She wouldn’t,” said Hyke. “But if she had, by any chance, I’d have told her to keep her hat on and given her a week’s salary in lieu of notice.”

“I suppose you are aware,” remarked Mr. Adair, “that when such a course is taken, it is a sign that something is wrong?”

“It is, sir.”

“Now, Mr. Hyke——” began Adair.

“Yes?” heavily, stolidly, just a shade defiant, perhaps.

“You understand this girl is my daughter. She comes home and says she will not return to your shop on any account. What have I to think?”

Hyke ponderously felt his face over.

“To think?” he asked.

“Yes, Mr. Hyke, what have I to think?” And Adair became firmer.

“Why do you need to think anything?” Hyke asked. “Can’t your daughter tell you why she couldn’t return on any account?”

Adair cast a look at the assistant, as if he objected to a witness now.

“My daughter has told me,” he said. “And I have come down in person—as her father——”

“Just a minute, Evans,” Hyke called. “You can go to lunch now.”

“Yes, sir.”

The two men waited till he had gone. Adair was puzzled. But he was not nervous, then.

“I saw you looking at my assistant as if you felt averse to talk with him here,” said Hyke. “That’s why I told him to go.”

“Well, that’s very gentlemanly of you.”

Hyke said nothing. Adair looked as if, baffled, he might weep. He put the envelope in his pocket.

“I suppose there’s nothing to be said,” he remarked, very slowly, and in a plaintive voice. He turned about. Still in that plaintive voice, he said: “Good-morning, Mr. Hyke.”

“Good-morning, Mr. Adair,” answered Hyke.

Adair went up the two steps, into a city that seemed to him, with its June sunshine, its thin June air, all unreal, as if he might fall through it, waken from it.

In a dull way he felt that Ellen was not just Ellen, his daughter, his baby. She had her individuality. She was not his Ellen. He had nothing to do with her really. His thoughts did not move her. A man’s children have nothing to do with him. Everybody is alone. What had he come to that shop for?

He went back along Princes Street, feeling he could have done nothing but what he did. If he had been prepared for this reception given him, he could have planned a course of action. And yet, he asked himself, what could he have done otherwise? Then it occurred to him—what had he to tell his wife of the visit? For what had he asked his employer’s permission to go out? What had he walked the length of Princes Street to do, to say? There seemed nothing to be said. Everybody was just in the hands of Circumstance, moved like a pawn in chess—he had read that simile somewhere, though he could not play chess. He could play draughts; chess seemed too intricate.

Along the street the coaches crawled, the drivers cracking their long whips, and reiterating, “Roslin, Roslin!” or “Forth Bridge, Forth Bridge and back.” Women swept across the pavement, from jewelers’ shops, costumiers’, select libraries, select grocery-stores, select chemists’, and entered motor-cars or carriages. The doors were shut for them, the coachmen

raised their hands, or twirled their whips, to show the driver of any possible vehicle behind, that they were about to turn.

Through all this Adair returned unseeing. A sharp detonation brought him to a sense of his surroundings, at the West End again, near Hope Street. It was the one-o'clock gun on the Castle. He took out his watch and looked at it.

“Just two minutes slow,” said he.

CHAPTER XV

LOUISE and Tom had both lunched, and were off to business again, when Mr. Adair arrived at Crown Street. He was allowed to sit down to table before any questions were asked. That he did not begin a full report of the result of his morning's mission, without being requested to do so, was typical of him.

Ellen eyed him furtively, Mrs. Adair doubtfully, as she got the baked potatoes out of the gas-oven, where they kept warm on a shelf above that on which the rice-pudding waited, minus Louise's and Tom's portions, and the small portion that Ellen had been able to eat, she having no appetite to-day. The mince-meat patties—which Mr. Adair persisted in calling collops-balls—also made an appearance, and were set before him.

"Have you had your denner?" he asked his wife.

"No, I can't eat."

"Come, come," he said, "we maun eat. You must eat, mother. Have you had yours, Ellen?"

This was relief for Ellen. His tone of voice toward her was reassuring.

"Yes, I had mine with Lou and Tom."

"Well, wife, get a plate."

"There, there, then!"

Mrs. Adair took another plate from the dresser-rack, put it on the table, and sat down. Mr. Adair, having helped her to a generous supply, despite her cries of "Enough, enough!" cut a potato in half, and then Mrs. Adair said:

"Well, father?"

He put his hand in his pocket and held out to her the unopened envelope that Hyke had given him. Mrs. Adair stretched a hand.

"Oh, wait a bit," he said. "It's Ellen I should give this to. Ellen's not a bairn," and he changed the direction of his right hand, that held out the letter, while the left upheld a fork.

"What's this?" asked Mrs. Adair, half rising, and craning to see what was written on the envelope, that Ellen took from her father. "What's written on it? What is it?"

"It's my salary," said Ellen; but she did not open it.

“What does he say? Let me see,” Mrs. Adair persisted. Ellen held out the envelope, and her mother looked at it, read: “‘Fifteen shillings, half-week’s salary.’ That’s a nice beginning! He should have paid to the end of the week.”

Mr. Adair shook his head.

“I don’t think so, not the way Ellen left.”

Ellen looked at her father sharply, still in some suspense, although hopeful.

“Well, what happened?” said Mrs. Adair.

Ellen sat down to listen.

“Just what was to be expected. I told him I had come on the matter of my daughter, and he told me to wait a minute, stepped over behind the counter, and handed me that envelope. He had it lying there, ready.”

Adair paused so long, that his wife said: “And do you mean to say you took it and came away?”

“Oh, no. I left Shandwick Place before twelve, and I wasn’t back till after one, so I couldn’t just have walked along and got that and come back, for I walked quick.”

Ellen, with the envelope in her lap, and her hands over it, sat passive.

“What happened, then?” asked Mrs. Adair.

Adair paused to swallow a piece of potato, gulpingly.

“I asked him how he knew she wasn’t coming back,” he said, “to get that ready, like.”

“And what did he say?”

“He said he knew from the way Ellen went off the night before—he knew that she wasn’t coming back.”

“And you?”

“Well, I asked him what he would have done if she had come back. Aye, I think that was the next point; aye, I think that came next. He said he would have given her a week’s pay in lieu of notice, and told her it wasn’t worth while to take off her hat.”

“What!” cried Mrs. Adair. She looked from Ellen to the old man, from her husband to Ellen.

“Just that,” he answered. “Now, wife, there was no use of me making a scene and a disturbance. But I couldn’t take that lying down, so I told him that he must understand the meaning of any such course being taken with an employee—I think that was well phrased——”

“Well, well; what did he say?”

“Would you believe me, he puts his hands on his hips, and says he, quite civil and givin’ a nod, ‘Just that—you’ve got the right of it,’ or something like that, he said. Well—well, you see, there was no more to be said.”

“I don’t see that at all!”

“Och, mother,” said Ellen, “father did his best. If Hyke went on like that, what could father say? He couldn’t make a scene—a vulgar scene. I think, to treat him the way he did, with silence, was the best way. Who’s Hyke, anyhow?”

Mr. Adair filled his mouth with collops and potato, chewed vigorously, swallowed vigorously, and all the while his eyes were on his daughter.

“I could see he drinks, Ellen,” he said.

“You could see that?” Ellen asked.

“Aye, I could see that, Ellen.”

“Was that all, then?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“Eh? Oh, practically, practically,” answered Adair.

“You’re keeping something back,” said the mother.

“No, no; I’m not. He asked me if my daughter had given her reasons for refusing to come back, and I said she had.”

“He had the cheek to ask that!” exclaimed Ellen.

“Effrontery!” said Mrs. Adair.

“Now,” said the old man, wagging his head, “to be just to the man, he didn’t strike me as insolent. A drinking-man, yes, and a taker of snuff, but he wasn’t insolent. Indeed, he sent the assistant out, because he thought I wouldn’t like a third party being present. No; when I look back on it, I don’t see I could have acted otherwise.”

“I wish I had gone down,” said his wife. “Did you give him to understand that you didn’t like your daughter to be treated the way he treated her?”

“Oh, aye! That was the point of my visit. He understood that.”

“For my part,” Ellen broke in, “I think we make too much fuss. It was all my fault. I should have left on the first sign of his drunkenness.”

“Do you think you left him feeling he had disgraced himself, and that Ellen was too good for his dirty second-hand book-shop?” inquired Mrs. Adair.

“I’ll not say ‘yes’ to the first half,” her husband replied, carefully. “He was real cool about it. But as for your second question, he saw clearly

enough that we were far from pleased. One thing I said was: 'I want you to understand that my daughter has told us why she couldn't stay on, and I've come to see you, specially, as her father.' "

"Well, that was good," said Mrs. Adair. "He could see she wasn't alone in the world."

Ellen breathed more freely, feeling an end of the suspense. But just then her mother had a thought.

"Where's the envelope?" she said. "You haven't opened it. See if he's put in the right amount."

"Yon man would do that," replied old Adair. "He's a big drouth of a man, a big drinking-man, but he's not——"

"Oh, it's all right, I'm sure," cried Ellen. "Where did I put it again?"

"In your lap," said her mother, sharply. "You must be in love."

"So I did!"

Ellen feared that there might be some note inside that would upset all this dawning tranquillity; but she opened the envelope then, and her suspense was wholly over. All that it contained was the fifteen shillings.

"I suppose we'd better forget about it," said Mrs. Adair, and sighed. "Ah, well! Have you any idea when you'll get your ten days' holiday, father?"

"I'm not sure. It's about time we decided."

"I'm asking because Louise can get off next week. And seeing Ellen's not to be working now, she might as well have a holiday before looking for another situation."

"Well, when would you like me to try and get mine? In July, I suppose?"

"I think so."

"Where were you thinking of going this year?" he asked.

"I'm not sure. I was thinking of Peebles. It's a bonnie place, and we've never been to Peebles."

"I never," said Mr. Adair, scraping his pudding-plate clean with noisy spoon, "think of Peebles, or hear the name, but I recall the adage—'Peebles for Pleasure.' What's the time? Is that clock right? I think I was two minutes slow to-day, when the gun went." He looked at his watch. "Yes, I'll have to run. An hour off, and late after dinner, the day after I got the promise of my rise in salary, is a nice state of affairs."

"You think you would like Peebles?" asked Mrs. Adair.

"Wherever you like, wife—there I'll enjoy my holidays."

And he ran off.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT was a buoyant afternoon for Ellen; and, the suspense thus fortunately over, and her father gone off to business, she could have sung through the house with delight. But she did not. She had respect, if not for her father's capacity for insight, assuredly for her mother's. Her mouth opened to begin a lilt, she restrained herself. There was something about her mother, not exactly of suspicion, but as of discontent at the lame ending to the Leith Street affair. Ellen could see that Mrs. Adair was in a condition in which seeds of suspicion could easily be sown. She checked herself, and subdued the tendency to exultant song. She must not seem relieved too greatly.

"Well, that's over," she said. "And I think I must go down to Princes Street and buy some things. Is there anything I can get for you?"

"Let me see," said her mother. "I wonder if I could get out this afternoon."

"Oh, could you come?"

"No, I think I'd better not."

"All right," said Ellen. "Is there anything I can get for you?"

Mrs. Adair looked thoughtfully at her daughter.

"I'll look in for Louise and come home with her," Ellen added quickly, "seeing you can't get out."

"Oh, all right. Yes, that would be nice," Mrs. Adair said.

Ellen went into a new Edinburgh. Marchmont Road seemed broader than usual; the cable-cars seemed to run gayly, instead of to crawl funereally. For a change, a relief from monotony, seeing that so often, of late—every day, indeed—she had trod the Jaw Bone Walk, she cut across the Meadows to Bruntsfield Links. She was attired in her best, as for Sunday, or holiday.

In Lothian Road, just a little way beyond Tollcross, she heard rapid steps behind her. She felt that they were hastening after her; and raising her head slightly, and turning it ever so little, she looked under the drooping eyelids, with the long lashes, wondering who pursued her.

"It's you, Helen!"

She turned her head. The self-collected man of the interview in Hyke's was doffing his hat, a different one to-day.

"Oh, how are you?" said Ellen. "Where did you spring from?"

"I've been up at Marchmont Road, seeing a man there."

She made a rapid guess that this friend of his who lived in the Marchmont Road would be a student of the University.

"I'm so glad to see you," he said. "You're not off to business, are you?"

"No, I have left the book-shop," Ellen answered, walking on. "My people did not like me being there. I wouldn't have gone out to work, only I hate sitting at home doing nothing."

"So you're your own mistress now?"

"My own mistress," she said, the phrase pleasing her.

He looked, as they walked, at her neck, and then slowly to her eyes, found them watching him, and smiled, to which she responded with a vivacious twinkle. It was the smile with which she was wont to *have on* young men; but the result of it, the effect upon this one, was not quite the effect it seemed to have on most that she knew. It was not that he took for granted the conferring of an engaging glance upon him—that wasn't it. It was rather that he did not seem excessively overjoyed. He smiled back in a way that made her heart leap.

"Do you know that you are pretty cool?" she asked.

"I cool?"

"Here we are walking along together, and you haven't told me your name. I don't know who you are—isn't that cool?"

"You forget," he said, "that I had to christen you. I am glad you chose Helen instead of Cleopatra. Look here, couldn't we go and have something—is it tea-time yet?—and a full and formal introduction can be given where we can sit down and be comfortable, instead of having our every word deafened by the clatter of these car-bells, and this rattle of carts. Why don't they pave Edinburgh like London? Shall we go and have—it's too early for tea—have you lunched?"

Ellen hesitated. She had eaten such a small dinner that she did not feel as though she were lying when she said: "No."

"Oh, good; you're late—like me. That chap I went to see is stewing for an exam. He eats nothing but breakfast and dinner, just stews for exams and drinks coffee. Where shall we go?"

"I'll leave it to you."

"I know. We'll go over here." They had turned into Princes Street. "There's a place here where there's both expanse and seclusion, don't you know? The last lunchers are clearing off about now, but we'll get something to eat, and we'll have a feeling of being able to talk. Here we are."

They entered through doorways that made Ellen think of the hatpins Jimmie had given her—quaint thought—so quietly "toney" that only "toney" people would care to swing them. It was the kind of place that Mrs. Adair would have liked her daughters to be able to go into some day, casually, matter-of-factly, for lunch, when they happened to be in town, shopping, from their castles in Spain. Mrs. Adair, when out in the neighborhood of Colinton or Juniper Green, had seen houses such as she would like to visit her daughters in, they mistresses of them—large, ivied houses, embowered in trees. From such houses would they run in to Edinburgh now and then, and in their cars glide to a standstill before the shops of Princes Street. But the manner of attaining an ambition sometimes turns the attainment and the ambition to derision.

Ellen entered as she thought one would enter who was accustomed to such "toney" doors, and found a rich sense of hush within. There was a carpet on the floor, she noticed, a carpet of deep colors and deep pile. There was a man in tail-coat to usher them to a table.

"Now, I suppose it is a question rather of what is on, than of what we would like," said her friend.

"I don't think so, sir," replied the waiter. "I think you'll find this satisfactory?" and he presented a menu-card to each.

Ellen felt no sense of fluster. If her father was a "sumph" of a head porter, her mother had been a wise woman, and had made a point, during holidays, of sometimes having lunch or dinner with the girls at hotels such as she hoped they would one day be in a position to treat with ease. Thanks to Mrs. Adair's far-seeing vision, Ellen found nothing entangling in the menu-card.

"I do like," her entertainer remarked, when the waiter had gone, "to have Scotch waiters attend to me in Scotland. In England there is such a tendency to the accents of Italy. One always feels as if some great tenor out of Ouida is attending to one's wants."

This was not beyond Ellen's depth. She had read *Moths*, if not with the seeing eye of such critics as Max and G. S. Street; she had—perused it.

"Are you a great reader?" she asked.

"No, I can't lay claim to that. I'm the Philistine. That man I went to see to-day"—he laughed—"I had him down for a week-end, once, at home, and

he looked at my shelves, all along them. I said, ‘Anything to please you there?’ and he said, ‘Robert, I know you now. To know a man, see his books. You are a country gentleman.’ Rather good, don’t you think?”

“Yes,” said Ellen, and the coming of another waiter, with another list, full of names as fascinating to the ear as the names in a catalogue of roses, saved her from having to express any opinion beyond that agreement with something she did not understand. Yes—she would have wine, but left the selection to her host.

He nodded and then returned to the interrupted subject.

“It was just as if he called me a groom, the way he said it.”

Ellen had lost the context, but began a new thread—and neatly, too.

“That’s your Christian name you’ve told me,” she said. “You can let the surname slip when you tell me about London. You mentioned London just now.”

He smiled in her eyes, taken with her suggestion of a method by which to introduce himself—or give her his name. It was the manner of successful women who have used sparkle to cover other lacks. A scientist’s wife may be the better for knowing what a retort is, in his sense of the word; but a mistress need only have the knack of the other kind. Toward knowledge, Ellen had always been contemptuous. It was on the day that Louise avowed that she went up to the magazine-room in the Public Library, that there came the marked severance of the sisters. A female “sumph” was despicable in Ellen’s eyes, laughable as a eunuch.

“I know some bits of London,” said Robert. “I can find my way to the Empire, even if the fog is bad enough to hide the brilliant front—and that would be a bad fog. I saw Genée there.”

“Did you? Isn’t she a darling?”

“You’ve seen her?”

“Yes. She came to Edinburgh. But go on about London.”

The waiter poured the wine for them. They paused in their chatter to watch the bubbles rise and wink and break. He switched on the light over them, as if to add to the glitter, gave a little bow, after doing so, as if he understood. It certainly made the wine seem brighter and the *entente* closer. So do wise theater-managers shut out the glimmers of daylight from matinée performances. The artificial is not for the daylight.

“I know the Criterion. I could find it in a fog, too. Do you know the Criterion?”

“I’ve never been in London,” said Ellen. “I should love to see it.”

"I should love to drive you——" He hesitated. "I should love to be your guide." He paused. "'Bob Ramsay,' you would say, 'you are a——'"

He held up his glass, and she hers, and they sipped, smiling each to each over the wine.

"Tell me more," she pleaded, "and I'll tell you what I would say—though," she added, "it's all quite impossible."

"So," said he, "did our grandfathers speak of flying, and yet last time I was in London I—didn't fly—but a flying-man took me up——"

"You've been up in an aeroplane! Oh, I should love—no, I shouldn't. What is it like?"

"Did you not read what some sentimental novelist said of flying?"

"I wonder?" said Ellen.

"What was his name? I forget. All the papers printed it. Like love, like ——"

"Yes, I read that—of course!"

The *entente* grew between them, but Ellen wasn't *having him on*. They seemed to be swimming along together. Still, it was great fun, and a change from Hyke's; and if her mother saw her, Ellen would say: "It's what you've always wanted, isn't it?"

"Tell me more," she said. "You were at the Criterion and asking me to call you a darling." She shot him the archest glance. "What else would you show me?"

"Regatta-week at Henley," he suggested, acknowledging her speech with a little blink, not ecstatic.

"I've seen a picture of that," she cried, "all sunshades and boats hiding the water, and people looking down on the crush."

"That's Boulter's Lock," said Ramsay. "Yes, up the river for a week. But I was just stepping out of the car with you at the Criterion. I think we'd go round in a circle there. The Café Royal for supper is a pleasant diversion. I would be honored to show you the Café Royal. It's like going to another world, going to London. It's like reading Shakespeare—it seems all quotations. London seems to be telling you what you've heard already—Strand, Oxford Street, Regent Street, Whitehall, Piccadilly, Bird Cage Walk, Regent's Park, Hyde Park——"

"Oh!" sighed Ellen. "It's charming."

She sipped wine from her glass, picked up her asparagus, which her mother had told her should always be held with the fingers.

"Well," she said, "London will have to wait. For the present I'm going to Peebles."

He looked at her with slight closing of his eyes, that accentuated the almond shape. It was by advice of a fellow student, while he was wasting time at Edinburgh University—for even Edinburgh University can only bring out of a man what is in him—that he had arrayed himself as Ching-Ching, on the occasion of the last masquerade in which he had taken part.

"Peebles," he answered. "Well, Destiny's going to be kind to me, for I've got to go to—er—Clovenfords. That's quite near. When do you go down?"

"Next week, I hope," she said, with a certain pleasure.

This calm young man, whose "gameness" was so deep and glittering, had stated his delight in Destiny bringing them together. It was slightly different from "I'll see you again." She felt as if the vista opened wider before her.

"You'll have a cup of coffee?"

"Yes."

"Cigarettes?"

Bob Ramsay was satisfied with her so far, upon this closer observation; and when she took a cigarette, with a gold tip, and pouted over it, his eyes were almond again.

After the cigarette, Ellen bethought her, as they dallied, that "absence makes the heart grow fonder," that denial stimulates pursuit. She considered that she should be the first to suggest an end of the tête-à-tête. Despite all his talk of things she had not seen, he gave no outward sign—at least that Ellen could see—of any conceited idea lurking in his mind that he was *conferring* his attentions. If he had, Ellen would have said: "Excuse yourself." But she must, nevertheless, not be too eager for his company.

"It's been very jolly," she said, "but I must go."

"I suppose we can't stay here for ever," he answered. "Now where do we go?"

"I've to meet my sister," she said, drawing on her gloves.

He looked at her calmly.

"And that means——" he began, and paused, leaving it to her. "Bill, please."

"Yes, sir."

"Perhaps you'll see her at Peebles," suggested Ellen.

He inclined his head.

“I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting your sister, but I’d rather see you,” he said.

She surveyed him thoughtfully, drawing a glove onto an extended hand; and he tapped his finger in the puckering palm, where it showed, as she thus buttoned gracefully.

He did not ask at what hour she had to meet her sister. He believed that his Helen was going to Peebles, in a week. He was prepared to discover that the sister was fictitious. Still, one never knows.

It was chiming five from the city clocks when the doors were opened for them, a waiter on one side, a door-attendant on the other. Ellen made an exit that would surely have charmed her mother—had her mother been sure that the intentions of Ellen’s companion were “honorable.” And at the door they parted.

“Next week at Peebles,” he said.

She looked over her shoulder, turning away, solemnly roguish.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN LOUISE did see Bob Ramsay at Peebles she was not favorably impressed.

Mrs. Adair went down as an advance scout to look for rooms in that pleasant royal burgh, visited houses in the windows of which were cards announcing "Furnished Apartments," and came back very well-satisfied. She described the chosen place, told of the little gravel-path up to the house, the trimmed lawn, the rustic seat before one of the windows, the roses climbing up a trellis.

"I have taken the front room, the one with the rustic seat before the window. It will be dining-and sitting-room. And I've taken the two bedrooms upstairs," she explained.

"Is there a sloping ceiling?" asked Ellen.

"Only slightly, to the front."

"Can you knock your head on it?"

"Oh, no—it's not one like that."

"I like a sloping ceiling," said Louise. "It's like the country."

"Oh, you would enjoy love in a hut!" said Ellen. "For a wee while," she added.

There was no doubt that the girls were growing apart.

"Well, you'll both like it," Mrs. Adair pacified. "There is a slight slope, just a slight slope, in the bedroom ceilings, just above the windows, in front; and the windows are deep-set, the same in both rooms, upstairs. Then there's a bedroom—a small bedroom—off the parlor-sitting-room, where Tom can sleep when he gets down."

"How long have you taken it for?" Ellen inquired.

Mrs. Adair paused, and then said, with a nod, "For a month!" tilted her head, and pressed her lips together.

"A month!" cried the girls, upon different keys.

"Yes, we can afford it. I've taken it for all July. You see, you, Ellen, can be down all the month; you, Louise, will be down the first fortnight; Tom comes down for the middle fortnight; your father gets the last ten days, and

we'll have him down for week-ends, too. For all the week-ends we'll be together."

"A month is all right," said Ellen. "Fancy being able to say we're away for July. I wish we could say 'and August.'"

"Well, well; we may find ways and means. If anybody comes to see us when we're there, they can think we've rented the whole house. There's just an old woman and her niece in it. They live at the back, and I've taken it *with attendance*, so they'll look like our servants. There's good golf-links at Peebles; and if Tom comes down, though he says somebody wants him to go to North Berwick—some of the lads are going down there together—he could invite his friends to come down for a round on a Saturday."

"There's a hydropathic at Peebles, isn't there?" said Ellen.

Her mother nodded, as one impressed.

And thus it was, that on the evening of the first of July, the three sat, after a country tea, on the rustic seat before the house, Mrs. Adair placid, contented, Ellen excited, talkative, but her talk all froth over a great, swirling deep, her talk like the surface of bubbles on the great pool below Neidpath Castle, on which the reflected sunset was even then glowing—in the smooth and oily parts with an effect like burnished copper, in one place, like gleaming purple enamel in another. They had walked as far as Neidpath Castle that day, before tea.

Louise sat quiet, the spell of Tweed upon her, day-dreaming of that revolving pool and the trees standing up on the little point beyond, standing as if hushed over their broken reflections, reflections blurred in ripples, then clear in a space of sheeny, purple water, as the pool swirled in circles and the bubbles burst in its center. Louise had never found anything so peaceful as the row of yews that stands on the slope going down to that pool—Queen Mary's Yews, she heard someone call them. She had never seen any sward so glowing a green as that of the slopes that rolled down from the Castle. Walter Lane had told her to look at the chiseled bunch of strawberries over the crumbling gateway. She had looked at it, pointed it out to her mother and sister, and secretly imagined, pretended, played to herself, that Lane was beside her, pointing it out to her.

To Ellen, Peebles was somewhat tame till her Prince should come. To Louise it was as if her man was with her already. Her mother wondered how she knew so much about the neighborhood, as they had not bought a guide-book. When Ellen was not chattering how she was sure a Queen Mary toque would suit Mrs. Adair, or saying she wanted some strawberries, Louise was suggesting walks. They should go and see the Black Dwarf's Cottage; they

should climb the hill away beyond the High School on the hill opposite, and see the old Roman Camp. Perhaps, even, they might pick up an old Roman coin there.

“What’s the good of old Roman coins? You’ll go daft, yet, I think, Louise,” Ellen commented.

“Now, now, Ellen, I know you’re only funning, but——” Mrs. Adair interposed; and then to Louise: “Who was the Black Dwarf? I seem to know the name.”

“I don’t know myself,” answered Louise, laughing. “But the only way to learn things is to listen to all one hears and follow it up to something else. I’m going to buy a copy of *The Black Dwarf*.”

“Oh, a book! There’s a book about him!” said Mrs. Adair, smoothing her lace collar.

“Yes, that’s all I know. I believe it’s worth reading. It’s by Scott.”

“Och, Scott’s stale!” said Ellen.

“I can’t read much of him,” said Louise, “but *The Heart of Midlothian* seems awfully big to me.”

“Then there’s *Waverley*, and *Rob Roy*, and *Kenilworth*—I know all the names,” said Mrs. Adair. “Yes; Sir Walter Scott was a great writer.”

“Well! If we’re going to talk about books we haven’t read!” cried Ellen; and, running indoors, she returned with a coat, threw it on the lawn, and sat thereon, a figure to draw the eyes of youth to her a second time, her black hair asheen, her lips red as cherries, her chin like ivory, her cheeks like the roses swaying on the trellis. And Solomon might have seen her temples “like a pomegranate cut in twain,” though none of the bards of their Border country, in their most extravagant adulation of the lassies, fled to foreign fruits for similes.

“You look well, Ellen,” said Mrs. Adair.

“Do I? I feel fine! But I’d rather have a three-penny-bit with a hole in it to hang on my bracelet, than an old Roman coin! I say, Louise, what’s yon coin that Walter Lane has hanging on his watch-chain?”

“It’s a long time since we’ve seen him,” Mrs. Adair remarked, wetting a finger with her tongue and touching some slight roughness she had encountered under her chin. “You told me you met him in Edinburgh one day, Louise, that he was back again.”

“Do you remember——” Ellen began, inconsequential, not waiting for a reply to her inquiry regarding the coin, and with a sudden outburst, a

chuckle, of laughter, jocosely recalling how she had smeared with cold-cream a book that Lane had lent her.

As abruptly as she had laughed, she straightened her features. She said no more, realizing that neither her mother nor Louise might share her merriment over that reminiscence.

"It's a Roman coin," said Louise.

"Oho!" chaffed Mrs. Adair. "You paid a lot of attention to Mr. Lane's watch-chain." And she tapped Louise playfully.

Ellen regarded this flippancy with interest, but the dew on the grass made her rise then, and Mrs. Adair shivered slightly. The sunset had faded.

Perhaps, after all, Louise was not averse to some mention of Walter Lane. She had been meeting him frequently in Edinburgh, at odd times. The meetings had become more and more frequent, so that when she told him she was going to Peebles for a fortnight, it was in both their minds that fourteen days would be a long time not to see each other.

"I'll write to you," he had said.

"Will you? I would like you to."

And she was going to make no secret of the receipt of these letters when they came. There would be no waylaying of the postman so that she might secure and hide Walter's letters for secret perusal. She was prepared for giggings, banterings. She was even prepared for rustling satisfaction of Mrs. Adair, and intrusive attempts of that lady to pilot and direct; but flippancy from Ellen, and commercial plottings from her mother, she had decided, would be to her, as the adage says, "like water on a duck's back."

The letters did come. One came by the next morning's post. It was Ellen who ran out to meet the postman.

"'Miss Adair,' " she read. "'Swallowcroft, Peebles'—oh, my, what toney writing! Conceited writing!"

She handed the letter to Louise, who took it without expression.

"Just one for Louise?" asked the mother. "Who's it from, dear?"

"It's from Walter Lane."

Mrs. Adair eyed her daughter, head on side a moment.

"Oho!" she said.

But Ellen was laughing riotously over a picture post-card. She held a sheaf of half-a-dozen. The views did not amuse her much; only one, that depicted a large sunshade, and an arm round a waist beneath it, seemed wholly delightful to her. Across the top were the words: "Having a great time at North Berwick." This was from one of the young men that Mrs.

Adair styled "Tom's friends." Ellen had found him fairly "game," but now, when her mother asked, "What's the joke?" she tossed the card into Mrs. Adair's lap, and announced: "He's a silly ass."

Mrs. Adair drew her spectacles out of the hanging case which she wore upon her belt on holidays, and looked at the card.

"I don't like this, Ellen," she said. "I know young people are young people, but no gentleman would send a card like that through the post."

Over her spectacles she watched Louise, who, having read Lane's letter in the window-seat, now put it in her pocket.

"That is quite satisfactory," thought her mother, and held her hand for the other cards from various friends, who always remembered that Ellen collected picture post-cards.

The days flew past. There were walks up Tweedside, rambles in the woods, stereotyped admiration of the views from Mrs. Adair, agreeing responses from Ellen, in accents that her mother sometimes thought were the accents of mockery. There was a visit to the Black Dwarf's Cottage; there were hours of sitting upon the grass, above the bridge on the south bank, while Mrs. Adair crocheted under a sunshade, shaking her head every now and again, saying, "Oh, these wasps!" and Louise tried to read *The Black Dwarf*, but found it "awfully up and down," didn't like it as much as *The Heart of Midlothian*, and Ellen read the jokes in *Tit-Bits*, laughed over them, and, looking up, caused passing young men in knickerbockers, meeting her eyes as she laughed so, to consider her a pretty tricky summer girl, and consider that her crocheting mother was a cumberer of the ground.

There was an attempt to climb to the Roman Camp, but Mrs. Adair decided she was growing old, so they sat down, half-way up the hill, and never saw the top. By Ellen's suggestion, who thought some women in a dogcart looked at the homing threesome with contempt, a vehicle was chartered to take them for a drive.

"I wonder where we should go?" said Mrs. Adair.

"There's Traquair," volunteered Louise.

"Sounds stale," said Ellen.

"Traquair," answered the mother, thoughtfully. "I seem to remember a song about Traquair."

"It's a nice drive," agreed the clean-shaven young man who had been ordered to call for them at Swallowcroft. "We can go out by Clovenfords and come back on the ither side. Mak' it a circular tower."

There was a swelling in Ellen's breast, a quick solemnity, a quick vivacity at the name of Clovenfords.

"Let's have it," she cried. "Let's have it, mother!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Adair, turning to the driver, "if it's not too far. I would like to be back by tea-time."

He touched his hat.

"I'll manage that for ye nicely, ma'am," he promised; and the three climbed in and settled down comfortably for the drive.

But Ellen saw no sign of her Ramsay all the way. Mrs. Adair thought Traquair "a pretty little place." Ellen shrilled: "Oh, lovely!" They alighted at the old church, where Louise was charmed to see that the rope of the little bell hung outside the tower. She gave it a careful and gentle tug, and the bell rang one faint note that seemed to fill the whole vale. She thought it the most peaceful place she had ever seen, when the trepidation at the success of her tug was over—all silence, and humming of bees, and warm sunlight, occasional far bleating of sheep, and the great blue sky over all, with slow, white clouds that made the church appear more diminutive and quaint, and seemed to percolate their blue and white elusively into the whitewashed walls. She felt sad for all the lovers of vanished Junes lying under the recumbent stones.

On the way back, the driver twitched his whip, pointing to a house, and gave them some erroneous information regarding a novel of Sir Walter Scott's, in which it was described. A little further on, Ellen had the pleasure of looking down her nose at the three women, walking, who had looked down their noses at her the other day, when the positions were reversed. She felt that the journey had not been in vain, when they came into Peebles again, and drove across the Bridge, as the chimes, that sounded like an imitation, she noted, of the chimes of Saint Giles's, Edinburgh, rang in the tower of a church that was built, as to shape, she remarked, with a slightly supercilious tilt of chin at it, also as if in imitation of Saint Giles's.

On Saturday, Tom came down, in knickerbockers, with a new briar pipe, pyjamas, a safety-razor, and a quarter-pound tin of tobacco. His father, he said, thought it better to stay at home this week-end, but would come down next.

Tom went up to look at the golf-course; and, on his return, when, after repeated asseverations to his mother that he was hungry and wanted his tea, Ellen said, "Feed the brute!" he looked at his younger sister freezingly, wagged his head, and remarked:

"I saw your old *customer* trying to play golf—I mean to say replacing the turf."

Louise looked doubtful.

“Who’s this you refer to?” asked Mrs. Adair.

Ellen laughed gayly, as if her brother were joking; and he dismissed the subject with: “Och, I wish that woman would hurry up with the tea.” So Mrs. Adair thought that this chatter was just his levity, and no more was heard of the *customer* till about the second week of the month.

Tom, his first week nearly over, was off to fish. He was uncertain whether to stay on here or to spend his second week of holidays at North Berwick. Louise sat in the window of the sitting-room, writing letters. Ellen and Mrs. Adair, walking on the Stobo Road, homeward from a ramble, moved to the roadside, hearing the sound of a motor behind them. It drew near, with quiet chirr. It drew to a standstill level with them, and the young man who drove it raised his hat.

“You won’t mind my stopping,” he said. He spoke very quickly. “You may remember me.”

Mrs. Adair, puzzled, considered him, trying to recall his face, for he glanced from mother to daughter as he spoke. The “you” might be singular or plural.

“I saw you in a book-shop in Leith Street,” he explained.

Ellen was captivated by his daring. Her own daring came to her aid.

“Oh, yes, I remember you. You are Mr. Ramsay.” His eyes gave a jump of appreciation. “This is my mother,” she said.

Mrs. Adair bowed in a very stately manner.

“How do you do?” she said, coldly.

“But I don’t know your name, though you remember mine,” said Ramsay.

“Mrs. Adair is my name,” said the mother. She felt perturbed. She was at a loss in this situation that had been suddenly thrust upon her.

“Are you living in Peebles?” Ramsay asked, in debonair tone.

“We are living in Peebles,” she answered, “on holiday.”

“Will you allow me,” he said, “to drive you down in my car?”

Mrs. Adair considered him even more carefully, then. He seemed to be a “gentleman.” *His* car, he said, too. It was a car of the most luxurious kind. Ellen gave her mother’s arm, on which her hand had been resting, a pressure. Mrs. Adair pictured herself driving up to Swallowcroft in that padded splendor, that purred along the road so sumptuously—and the young man was out beside them, opening the door. So she got in.

Ellen wanted to sit with him beside the wheel, and delayed, strategically.

“Perhaps you would rather sit next to me,” said Ramsay. “It’s more sport in front.”

Ellen slipped into the front seat gleefully.

Sport! There was more “sport” and “gameness” about this Mr. Ramsay than Ellen had ever dreamt of. Then, as she stepped in, in front, it suddenly struck her that perhaps here was not a flirtation; perhaps he would—she sank down on the cushions and springs.

“Mrs. Robert Ramsay,” she thought.

She arranged herself on the ample seat that told of comfort, luxury. Perhaps he was serious. Marriage, even, need not be a solemn matter, she considered. Perhaps marriage could be as tickling a sensation as flirtation—when one had money.

The drive was too short—far too short. Mrs. Adair had not decided whether this was a good episode or a bad, a proper or an improper; and Ellen had but had her appetite whetted for more, when, in three minutes, they were standing outside Swallowcroft, the mother feeling reassured, because, his kind office of giving them a lift over, Mr. Ramsay showed no desire to dally.

His attitude—so nicely not thrusting himself forward—and his motor-car made her toy with the thought that perhaps she should ask him to come in and have a cup of tea. Then she decided that she had perhaps better not, until she could discover more about him from Ellen. Next moment she considered again that here was someone to be cultivated. So she vacillated like a pea on a jet of water. He looked serious. Hat in hand, and bowing, he climbed in behind his wheel again, settling Mrs. Adair’s interior arguments with a blending of doubt in the wisdom of letting a young man of such attractions depart so summarily, and of sense of dignity in letting him go. She called it “dignity,” but what she really thought was that it was better not to seem eager for his company, so that he might not think her captivated by him at once.

They turned onto the gravel-path.

“Oh!” Ramsay hailed. “Would you like me to call for you some day and take you for a drive?”

“It’s very kind of you——” began Mrs. Adair.

“I shall,” he said. “I’ll drop you a card and we can arrange.”

This seemed satisfactory enough, and Mrs. Adair bowed again and smiled. Ellen nodded and nodded, stepping backward up the path, as the car slid away.

Louise, looking up from her letter to Walter Lane—a long letter that told him of Traquair and the drive and the walks, and how she, too, had fallen

under the spell of the murmur of the Tweed—Louise looked in horror at Ramsay.

“What an awful-looking man!” she thought. “He’s like a Scotsman with a lascar’s eyes. How horribly snaky!”

Robert Ramsay was thoroughly discussed indoors. It was not altogether pleasant for Ellen, but she was learning that daring wins the day. Her mother asked her a vast number of questions. Who was this Ramsay? Ellen only knew he was a “customer” of Hyke’s.

“Did he come in often?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“Oh, yes.” Ellen thought that answer the best.

“He bought a lot, did he?” the mother questioned, thinking of the financial side.

Ellen turned her head and looked at Louise.

“He must have a splendid library,” she said, “quite the library of a country gentleman.”

But Louise said nothing. She could not forget the sense of disgust she had felt at sight of Ramsay.

“Did he speak to you often?” Mrs. Adair further interrogated.

“Yes—sometimes,” non-committally, contradictorily. “Sometimes I saw him. If Mr. Hyke was out, and coming back soon, I would ask him to wait, and we just chatted in an ordinary way till Hyke came back.”

“What kind of books did he buy?” asked Louise.

Her horror of Ramsay was intense. She felt as if a heel should be drawn over him.

“Oh, you’ve got questions, too, have you? I don’t ask you about Lane, do I?” Ellen said, head atilt at this meddling by her sister.

Tom came home in the middle of the talk, came home with muddy boots and a fishing-rod, and one fly-hook less than he had in his cap at starting out. He heard the voices pitched in a key that was beginning to be more frequent of late.

“Awful cats, women can be,” he grumbled to himself, took off his heavy boots at the door, entered the room of conclave in his stocking-soles, and passed through to the bedroom behind it.

“I only wondered,” said Louise. “You can have an idea of men and women by the books they read.”

“I suppose one can,” said Mrs. Adair, “when one reads books oneself. It is very difficult to know what to do—oh, o-oh!”

“What is it, mother?” asked Tom, stopping.

“Oh, my sciatica! I’m not as young as I was. And I wish I knew what was for the best.”

She heaved a sigh, sinking down into a chair, not without some grandeur, still under the spell of the car.

“I think Mr. Ramsay is serious about you, Ellen,” she said, “and I think you had——”

“Mother,” Louise interrupted, “wouldn’t it be better to leave it to Ellen? She knows herself—in here”—and she tapped her heart—“what is——”

“You’re daft!” said Ellen.

Tom said “Huh!” and looked at his relatives as he might have looked at sheep scuttling on a golf-course. He opened the bedroom door.

“You never asked my opinion,” he said in heavy humor. “What do I think? I think people should be left alone. The way you go on! It’s rubbish. You talk as if everything was mysterious, and should you do this, and should you do that? What is the trouble now?”

“Louise is corresponding with Walter Lane,” Ellen broke out, “and mother wants to know what his intentions are.”

“Ellen! Ellen!” said Mrs. Adair.

“Well, that’s easily answered,” Tom replied. “Louise is her own mistress.”

“There you are!” said Ellen, triumphantly, though she had hardly expected this response.

Louise began to cry, for some inexplicable reason, but nobody saw. She put her lengthy letter to Walter into an envelope, and slipped it into her pocket.

“And there’s a young man in love with me,” said Ellen, “and I’m my own mistress, too!”

“Who’s the young man?” Tom asked. “Him I told you I saw on the golf-course? If it’s him, I think it’s more likely you’ll be his mistress, if you don’t take care.”

“Tom!” ejaculated Mrs. Adair.

“Tom! Excuse yourself!” snapped Ellen.

Mrs. Adair and Ellen were on their feet, magnificent, Mrs. Adair’s sciatica forgotten.

Tom slipped into the bedroom and closed the door.

Louise, to hide her tears, went up to her room and lay on the bed till she heard her brother's voice hailing her. She rose.

"Yes, Tom?" she called.

"Good-by."

"What are you playing at now?"

"I'm not playing. I'm off to North Berwick."

She ran downstairs and found him hatted, carrying his waterproof coat on his arm, bag in hand, golf-clubs slung from his shoulder.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Oh, I've to apologize for what I said. Rubbish! I am going back to Edinburgh and down to North Berwick to-night, if I can catch a train. I'm sick of Peebles. 'Peebles for Pleasure!'" he scoffed. "So long, Louise. You've been crying."

"But you can't go like this——"

"I'm going to North Berwick, Louise." He kissed her cheek. "I want to get away from problems in the holidays for the rest of the time."

That night Ellen slept in the little back room, Mrs. Adair, as usual, in the room over the sitting-room, and Louise lay awake all night in the other room, heard the roses rustle under the window, heard the further rustle, through the night, of the Tweed, and heard, quarter by quarter, the bell of old Saint Andrew's ring. And that sound—"la-la, la-la!"—moved her, in the night outside, like ripples in water. It made her picture a very great night, full of mystery, and the town lying in a cup of the hills, tiny, insignificant, with people who knew nothing of the future, all sleeping in their beds under low ceilings.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER all, Ramsay did not send a note; he simply drove up to Swallowcroft one afternoon. To let the truth out—he had abstained deliberately from sending any note of warning or arrangement. He was quartered, for the time being, with a friend, and that friend was not at Clovenfords, but on the West Linton road, in the other direction. Upon that friend, one Basil Lee, he had descended a week ago, in a car, from Edinburgh, the car as much welcome as he. Basil, of course, smelt a rat, when Bob, to-day, as he was to do again, went out in the motor alone, saying to his friend: “To-day I have a business trip to make.”

The rasp of the brake being put on, the throbbing of the motor at the gate, and a single, short honk, were the first announcements of his return to Swallowcroft. Louise, after the midday dinner, had gone upstairs to pack, for this was her last day in Peebles; the next night she would be sleeping at Crown Street, with the sound of Tweed still in her ears, like the murmur in a shell. She had dallied over the packing of her belongings into the creaky basket-trunk, had paused, half-way through, to lie on her bed, where the various articles of apparel spread out for classification would permit, and dip in a book that had come from Walter, an anthology of *Ballads and Songs of Tweed*, at peace, looking at the white ceiling, or out at the blue sky, listening luxuriously to the veritable voice of the river—for the last afternoon.

Ellen was titivating herself downstairs in the bedroom vacated by Tom, behind the sitting-room, admiring the brightness of her eyes, the ruddy readiness of her lips. Mrs. Adair sat in the front room, in torture with sciatica. Ramsay’s feet crunched up the gravel-path, and he tapped on the open door.

“Ellen!” called Mrs. Adair; and, raising herself in her chair, she saw the car at the door. She had heard the sound of it, but had thought it was of some passing motor. “Ellen, would you mind opening the door? I think the—er—servant, the maid, is out shopping.”

Ramsay chuckled to himself.

“Silly old hen,” he thought. “Awful fraud.”

But Ellen had heard the crackle of the car, and the hoot of the horn, and knew the car had stopped before the gate. The little pressure of the horn—

bulb was, for her, like a quick, meaningful glance, when mother could not see. With a last flick to her hair she came forth.

“Yes, I’ll go, mother.” And she passed to the door. In the porch, “It’s you!” she said. “Come in, Mr. Ramsay.”

A stolen caress is more desirable to the Ellens than a frank one. And the Ramsays have no appetite for any other kind. In the porchway, Robert put his arm round her, held her close, kissed her on the mouth, and then said stonily: “How do you do, Miss Adair?” He was “game” and “daring” and all the rest of it. Ellen stilled the bumping of her heart and played her part to his.

“Go in there,” Mrs. Adair heard her daughter’s voice. “You’ll find mother in there.”

“I can’t rise,” said Mrs. Adair, as Robert, bowing Ellen before him, made his entrance. “I have an attack of sciatica.”

“You shouldn’t have sciatica in Peebles,” answered Ramsay, bowing over the mother’s hand.

“No,” said she. “Peebles is for Pleasure, by the adage.”

“And in July, too!” said he. “It must be very boring.”

“It is as absurd as chilblains,” exclaimed Mrs. Adair, laughing.

“Oh,” thought Ramsay, “this is where the daughter gets her sprightliness.”

“Sit down, won’t you?” said Ellen, sinking into the chintz-covered sofa, freshly covered for the summer visitors.

Ramsay sat down easily, and turned to Mrs. Adair, solicitous.

“Won’t you come for a spin?” he suggested. “It would do you good. I won’t jolt you up too much.”

“It is very good of you, but I couldn’t stir. I should dread it. I should scream.”

“I’m sorry—I’m awfully sorry. I had hoped to take you both out.”

“I know Ellen would like it,” said Mrs. Adair; “but you will have to be good enough to wait for a day or two. When I take a twinge like this it lasts three days. O-o-o-h! It’s quite impossible. But I appreciate your kindness.”

“I thought I would risk it being convenient to-day,” said Ramsay. “Well, it can’t be helped. There are plenty more days.”

Ellen pouted, ever so slightly. She looked at Ramsay with an odd kind of selfish tenderness; the expression fluttered, and passed. He held big, loose, soft gloves in his left hand. Ellen glanced at them, then up, and met his gaze.

"Ellen, where is Louise?" asked her mother.

"Upstairs, I think."

"Tell her."

Ellen rose and went into the porch, to the foot of the stairs, her face showing uncertainty.

"Louise!" she called, mounting half-way.

"Coming," said Louise, and a door opened above.

Carrying her book, Louise came down and followed Ellen into the sitting-room.

"My daughter, my elder daughter—Mr. Ramsay."

Louise looked at him as he stood, upon her entrance, with an air of deportment that, she thought, was as the stamp upon a coin that may ring false or true. She bowed, looking in his eyes—yes, almond-shaped, "like a Scotsman with a lascar's eyes," she had thought on first seeing him. Nearer sight, and sense, of him added to her intuitive dislike of the man.

"How do you do?" she said. "I saw you from the window when you brought home mother and Ellen the other day."

Ramsay inclined his head, taking refuge behind his deportment. Louise sat down, and Robert was impressed by her. He knew the signs of the "dignity" that is the real thing, and of that which is but, as it were, a truckler's snobbery.

"I had hoped to take Mrs. Adair out for a spin to-day. I am sorry to find her suffering like this," he said.

"The quivering of the car would be a poor massage, I'm sure," answered Louise, "however kindly intended."

"The roads are ripping to-day, I expect," said Ellen, looking out.

"Perfect," agreed Ramsay.

"It's a beautiful countryside in July," Louise commented.

"Would you like to accompany your sister?" he asked. "That is, if Mrs. Adair can be left alone."

"Accompany? Where? I don't understand."

"For a drive. Your mother"—and he inclined his head toward Mrs. Adair—"was good enough to——"

Ellen's expression to her sister now was an unspoken "Oh, you need not try to be so la-de-da. He's a match for you, Miss Prude, Miss Superior."

"Oh, my mother?" said Louise. "Well, it's unfortunate. Some other day she might be able."

"It would do you good, Louise," said Mrs. Adair. "You could get a later train."

"We could spin miles and back before tea-time," said Ramsay, "if you could be left alone?"

"I'm all right," declared Mrs. Adair. "This is Louise's last day. I think you should go, Louise."

Ellen rose and passed into the bedroom softly, and came out, drawing on her coat, plucked speedily from where it hung over the bed-foot, and with a long, gray scarf in her hand, snatched from the hook behind the door. She was prepared.

"Come on, Louise," she said. "What a day, too. And you can talk books with Mr. Ramsay, while I sit behind."

"You're sure you'll be all right?" asked Ramsay, rising, and looking with anxious expression at Mrs. Adair.

"I'll be all right," she assured him.

"I've a lot of packing to do yet," said Louise. "I can't accompany you, Ellen."

She looked at the eyes that she loathed so, turning from her sister, and saw the glitter of green in their cold gray.

"I really think you should stay with mother, Ellen," she said.

"While you pack and write your *billet-doux*!" Ellen trilled. "Oh, no!" And she was the prettiest bantering maiden imaginable.

"I did hope that you would be able to come," said Ramsay. "Won't you come too, Miss Adair? Once we start you'll want to go on, I know."

"Come on, silly," cried Ellen, and caught her sister's arm. "You go and wind it up, Mr. Ramsay." Those were the days when all cars had to be "wound up."

"All right. I'll leave your sister to your persuasive powers." And he strode off to the car.

"Ellen—he's a cad!"

"Louise!" began Mrs. Adair. "He's not——"

"That settles it," said Ellen. She fluttered off down the path, gay as a butterfly. "We'll be back to tea. It's no use—my sister won't come."

Louise's face was suddenly strained.

"Mother, mother!" she said.

Her mother looked at her, was infected by the expression of her face.

"You go, too!" she cried. "It's not right. Oh—I can't move. You go, Louise."

Louise ran upstairs for her hat and coat—and the motor chuckled away.

"They're off; they're off!" called Mrs. Adair.

Louise came down and stood in the doorway, looking at her mother. Mrs. Adair, the car being now gone, seemed perturbed. Then she consoled herself.

"It will be all right," she said.

"I hope so."

"What do you mean by *hope so*? Of course, there should have been a chaperon—if only to let Mr. Ramsay see that we know——"

"Oh, a chaperon is not what is wanted," said Louise. "Girls should be trained not to need chaperons. A chaperon is an insolence, or a fraud, or a dupe."

"Well, I've trained Ellen to remember her dignity. And I think—I suspect—that Mr. Ramsay really seriously——"

Louise was looking at her mother with a face from which all the signs of benefit from her holidays had been robbed.

"I don't quite like it myself," Mrs. Adair ended, changing under her daughter's gaze.

Louise sat down, hat and coat on knee.

"You should have gone," said Mrs. Adair.

"But I think he is a cad!" cried Louise.

"All the more need for you to have gone, then, if that is your opinion of him!" said her mother.

Louise said nothing. She did not even protest that she had gone, in the end, for her hat and coat, intending to accompany them. Thanks to Lane's talk, and, above all, Lane's love, she was loosening her life from the chains of her mother.

"Mother," she said, "girls should be taught honesty and honor. We're bound round with humbug—and where do we learn it?"

"Louise! What would Mr. Lane think of you if he heard you talking to your mother like this?"

It was a cold and formal tea they had together. Their landlady, entering with the tray, eyed them as she set it down—a wise, country body, and a woman. She knew all that had happened, not from any keyhole-listening to their talk, solely from the fact that a car had driven up, and after a deal of

muffled chatter in the front room the “young one” had run off, hilariously declaring: “We’ll be back to tea. It is no use—my sister won’t come.”

The tea was served a little earlier than usual, in her anxiety to tap the atmosphere of the room where the mother and the “other yin” sat. She saw Louise’s hat and coat still on her knee; saw that the fortnight’s roses had faded in her cheeks with marked celerity; saw the mother’s lips pressed close from other reasons than the twinging of a sciatic nerve. The old lady knew that it is a great injustice on Scotland to judge its morals by the tabulated lists of illegitimacy. In the country places the baby often precedes the marriage. He who talks of “rape,” after reading such columns of figures, is either a rogue trying to whitewash some other land, or an unimaginative, mathematical person. But a lass from the city, a lass like *yon*, going out in a car with a *lad* like *yon*, and the elder sister like *yon*—hech, sirs! Here’s an anxious day in Peebles.

Ellen and Ramsay did not return to tea. They did not return at lamp-time.

“When is your train?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“I haven’t got all my packing done yet—I forgot it.” And Louise took a candle and went upstairs.

The porter, who had been told the day before to call that night for the basket-trunk, arrived and carried it away, leaving an odor of moleskin with the scent of the closing roses. Louise came again into the room.

“Are you going back to-night, now?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“I’ll wait.”

Then the car arrived.

“There she is! I’ll get my train,” said Louise.

The motorists came into the lamplight, and neither of them met Louise’s eyes. Ramsay could meet Mrs. Adair’s, and began an account of a long spin and a breakdown—with water somehow, he could not think how, in the carburetor. And Ellen sat down, pressing her lips together, and agreeing, as if startled out of herself, every time Ramsay appealed to her with “Wasn’t it, Miss Adair?” or with “Don’t you think so?” Her eyes came back to the room when questioned so, when thus drawn into the talk.

“Yes, yes—so it was,” she assented hurriedly; or, “Yes, oh, yes, I thought so,” eagerly.

“You look tired,” said her mother.

“I think she has a headache,” said Ramsay. “We came back at such a rate after the breakdown, thinking you’d be worrying, Mrs. Adair. I think the rush of air sometimes——”

"Yes, it's the rush of air, I think," said Ellen.

"Have some tea for it," advised Mrs. Adair. "Louise, see, ring the bell. That tea is cold."

"I'm all right. I did enjoy the drive. I think—— I'm all right," Ellen protested.

"You'll have a cup?" said Mrs. Adair, turning to Robert. "Do sit down, Mr. Ramsay."

"I have a considerable way to go yet," said he. "I'd be delighted, but I'll be making them anxious at my place now, if I stay."

"Where do you live?" asked Louise. "Some way off?"

"Oh—er—I'm at the Five Gables. Five Gables is the name of the house. I hope you'll be able to come over."

Louise looked at him with an intensity of deep thought.

"You can get your train now, Louise," said Mrs. Adair. "Louise has just been waiting to see you safely home. She was anxious when you were late."

"I'm sorry——" began Ellen, and then bit her lip.

"I'm afraid I'm to blame," said Ramsay.

How Mrs. Adair could look upon him unmoved was beyond Louise's comprehension. He made his adieux, promising to call again, and take both out, if Mrs. Adair could come. He did not say he was sorry he wouldn't have the pleasure of taking Louise also. He never looked higher than her waist, or else he looked the rest of the way speedily, when forced, for the sake of deportment, to turn to her, and gazed beyond her, over her head, to left, to right, anywhere but at the eyes that were reading him.

The sound of his feet departed. Ellen even did not go to the porch with him, stood within the sitting-room, Louise behind her—Louise wholly erect, and remaining erect when he bent to her, making his exit.

Ellen turned when he was gone.

"I'm going to lie down," she said. "I've got such a headache with the way it rushed."

"I should have gone," murmured Louise.

"No, you shouldn't, Miss Prude," answered Ellen, giving her sister her back, a swinging back. "We don't need chaperons. We can look after ourselves."

"That's just what you said," remarked Mrs. Adair to Louise. And to Ellen: "You'll have a cup of tea or koko-ah and tell me about it when you've rested," she said. "What about your train, Louise?"

“I’m going off, Ellen,” said Louise.

Ellen was in the back room. It was dimly lit by the surplus light sprayed into it from the sitting-room.

“All right!” she called. “You needn’t have tried to spoil my drive. I don’t comment on your Mr. Lane.”

“Good-by, mother. Oh, do—do open your eyes. Don’t let Ellen have anything to do with that horrible man.”

“Louise!” cried Mrs. Adair. “I don’t know what’s taken you! And I’m hurt at your being so haughty to Mr. Ramsay. Tell your father to haste down by as early a train as he can get on Saturday.”

So Louise left Peebles, with Tweed singing its most plaintive air through the languorous dusk.

CHAPTER XIX

MRS. ADAIR, left alone with her younger daughter, felt ruffled. The way that Louise had spoken to her was not fitting from daughter to mother. It was these books that were the cause of this new manner; it was readings of books that were to blame for this change in Louise, she thought. She knew what the end of it would be. Walter Lane would make a *friend* of her later on, and some day he would tell her he was going to be married—and hoped she would remain *his friend*. This lending or giving of books was *all very fine*, but Mrs. Adair did not believe it led to marriage.

“Louise is fond of him, and taken up with his attentions,” she harped on, “but she’s got to be careful, or she’ll have a disappointment, and I don’t like her not inviting him to the house—so different from Ellen. Still, even if she did not marry him, there’s a kind of education to be got from books, too, and in a way he might fit her for some other man. But I know what Ellen finds annoying about her. Ellen has a sense of her own dignity, and Louise, it is clear, is having her head turned with all this solemn reading. It’s not a courtship at all. It’s a kind of friendship. She mustn’t get prudish.”

She rose stiffly and passed into the back room to see if Ellen was sleeping, and found her lying with closed eyes, her face looking almost delicate in its tinting of pallor and pink.

“It must give one a headache—flying through the air at the rate these cars go,” she thought. “I’ll let her sleep.”

There was no sound of movement in the little back room, while Mrs. Adair sat crocheting beside the lamp. At last bedtime came, and she began the tidying that preluded the turning-out of the light, pushed chairs into their places, tucked fancy-work away in her wicker basket, shook up the cushions. She wondered if Ellen was awake; and, opening the bedroom door cautiously, and standing back, so that the light from the sitting-room might throw a radiance into Ellen’s room, she bent her head, frowning and peering.

Ellen stirred slightly.

“Do you know the time?” asked Mrs. Adair.

“What time is it?”

“It’s bedtime. How do you feel?”

“Better.”

"Well, you may as well undress and get to bed properly. I think these motor-cars must be trying, the first time. Was he nice to you? What did you talk about?"

"I don't know. Yes, he was nice. We couldn't talk much, for the noise. He's all right, mother."

"Well, well, I'll hear all in the morning. You didn't cheapen yourself in any way, I hope?"

"Och, mother!"

"Of course, I've taught you."

"Yes. Good-night, mother."

But, oddly enough, there seemed little to tell of the drive, when, in the morning, over breakfast, Mrs. Adair plied her daughter with questions. Ellen did not know where they had gone. It was a long way—and she remembered to say that the car had broken down on the return journey, and that she had hoped her mother would not worry.

The days passed, Mrs. Adair sitting on the seat before their window, with her work-basket. The roses rustled on the trellis. Able to sit there and enjoy the thin winds, the mother begged Ellen to go for walks alone.

"Don't sit about here with me," she said. "I can only go short walks with this sciatica. Your holiday must not be spoiled. Your father will be down soon, and he'll keep you company. You go for a ramble, dear."

For Ellen it seemed all most auspicious. Her heart in a turmoil with new sport (sport that had been, she knew, in the minds of many boys she had "had on"), she sailed out daily, with a tilt to her head, a swinging of her hips, a wild young glamour in her eyes. Others understood, but not her mother.

Sometimes she went off after lunch and stayed till tea-time—one day even till long after dark, and came back with a sign of her wandering in a great bunch of wild roses, most of them withered by then. Though they were put in a bowl of water, they did not revive. Some had lost all their pale-pink petals; many had lost a petal. Taken as a bunch, it was sweet and odorous, but looked at closely, it was full of tragedy. The landlady, who brought the bowl in which to place the roses, at Mrs. Adair's request, commented in a slow, singing voice:

"Och, you're better to leave the flowers in the hedge. If ever they last the plucking they die in the hands."

Ellen found her a melancholy-voiced creature—an old, dried-up thing. And when Mr. Adair came down from Edinburgh and sat in front of the house with the *Weekly Scotsman* on his knee, and a pouch of tobacco, and the landlady, in the doorway, talked to him and her mother, Ellen thought

what fools old people were. They *fed her up*—talking about the old woman's sons and daughters.

"How many have you?" asked Adair, filling his pipe over the outspread newspaper on his knees.

"I have one in Manitobi—that's at Canada. And then there's the joiner lad, the second auldest, in New Zealand. And Teenie—she's married on a farmer, near Galashiels."

"Just the three, like us," said Mr. Adair, "only we've the two lassies and one lad."

"Aye, aye. Oh, there was anither. Her father whiles writes to her, but she'll not write to me."

Mrs. Adair, who had been a little doubtful of the propriety of talking with one's landlady in this way before the gaze of the passers-by, became interested.

"Aye, aye, aye. Ah, well, I suppose life is not all sweets," said Mr. Adair.

"You had trouble with her?" asked Mrs. Adair.

"She was awful for gadding about with the lads. I'm not strait-laced like some, but really she was an awful grief to her father and me—that light-headed. It was one after anither, and in the end half-a-dozen at once. It wasn't fair to the lads, for some of them were real attached to her. Aye, she had a wonderful charm for the lads. In the end, I was for putting her out of the house, but he said——"

"Who said?" asked Mrs. Adair, for this use of *he* was a vulgarism she refused to understand.

"Her good man, of course, her good man, the father," explained Adair.

"Aye. *He* said, 'Let her stop,' he says. 'Let her stop. We're maybe to blame, ourselves, in the training of her.' I wouldn't hear of it. She had disgraced the family. There had never been such a thing in his family or in mine's. But he kept on, 'Let her stop, let her stop. You would not turn out your cat, if it was going to ha'e kittlins, wumman,' says he. And he sat and smoked his pipe afore the kitchen vent, blowing the smoke up just as usual, for I have a tendency to asthma, and he aye remembers."

"Oh! Do ye find my smoke——" began Adair.

"No, no—no, sir."

The "sir" pleased Mrs. Adair. The old woman, she considered, evidently knew her place, after all.

"I was saying he sat there smoking," continued the landlady, "and when I came down—I tended her myself, you see; I used to help the doctor

sometimes, you see, and then I had my own, you see—when I come down, he looks around, and says he, ‘Is it a boy or a girl?’—‘It’s a lassie,’ I says. —‘By God,’ says he; yes, that was what he said, ‘if it’s a lassie, God help her,’ he says. ‘I’ll go down,’ says he, ‘and fetch up that lad by his neck. He’s a dirt of a lad,’ he says, ‘but I’ll make him marry her.’ ”

Ellen sat on the grass, transfixed. She had had contempt for the phraseology and pronunciation; she had sat there looking the old woman up and down with urban contempt. But now she held her breath.

“Yes,” the old woman went on, “he says to me, ‘I had hoped she would marry a man,’ says he, ‘if he was but a poor plowman, aye, or a road-mender. I’ll bring the little rat up,’ he says, ‘if I dinna brain him against the dyke on the way.’ And just wi’ that anither of the lads came in, and says he: ‘Could I ha’e a word with ye’—with *him*—‘alane?’ So I gaed out, and syne they both came ben the house, and my man had been greetin’. I saw the tears in his eyes. All I heard him say was: ‘As sure as death you’re daft, but if you love her well enough, it’s for her and you to decide.’ It seems the real father had run off, and this lad was willing to take her and the bairn, if she would have him. And have him she did.”

“It’s very extraordinary,” said Mrs. Adair.

“Aye, aye,” said Adair, “but it’s wonderful what a man will do for a woman.”

“Men are far too soft,” said the old dame. “She doesn’t treat him as he deserves, I’m sorry to say. That’s my quarrel with her, but *he* aye keeps in touch with her. ‘It’s a short life,’ says he. ‘The rivers aye rinning by,’ says he, ‘and we’ll not ken the rights and the wrongs of things till we’re doon among the moles,’ says he.”

Ellen shuddered. What a melancholy spoil-sport *he* must be, and a good deal of a sump. But she was interested in this further proof of the possibilities of a pretty woman.

After lunch, she dressed with care and sallied off.

“I’m just going down to the riverside,” she said.

“When will you be back?” asked her father.

“I don’t know.”

She came back long after tea-time, pale and pink, her mottled eyes bright, and with the air of one who nursed some exciting secret.

“Well, Ellen,” said her father, “where did ye get to?”

“I took a long round,” replied Ellen. “I didn’t know it was so far till I got half-way and saw I might as well take the circle instead of turning back.”

“There’s tea under the cosy,” said Mrs. Adair. “Maybe it’s hot enough yet. If it is not, just ring the bell.”

“Go through to the back yourself, Ellen,” suggested her father. “Shouldn’t she go through to the back herself?”

“No, no,” cried Mrs. Adair.

“Oh, well, I only thought that, after all, the lady of the house is not a servant. What’s that scent Ellen uses nowadays?”

“Scent?”

“Aye. It’s a new scent she has. What is it called?”

“I don’t think so. Maybe it is the flowers you smell.”

“Maybe it is. It doesn’t seem like that, though. But it is of no consequence. I only wondered.”

On the next day, he walked with Ellen up Tweed, upon the south bank, as far as the bend opposite Neidpath. She was somewhat ashamed of him, and wished her mother could have accompanied them, to be accompanied being apparently inevitable. But a paragraph about Jay Gould in the weekly paper she carried, and glanced at when they sat down for a spell over against the steep roll below Neidpath, cheered her. It told, in a few lines, of that millionaire’s contempt for dress. Her stylish mother and slouching father might not be so bad a sign in the world’s eyes, after all! She comforted herself with the consideration that, Peebles being a small place, those who saw her alone with her unpresentable father, one day, might easily see her, on another occasion, with her stylish mother, and understand.

She looked haughtily at two girls who, with a smirk and a nudge, passed by, for she recognized them as two giggling chits, who had been uncertain of her, the day before, when they watched her, on Peebles Bridge, climb into a motor-car there, and take her seat beside a young man of steely, victorious eyes. Now they looked at her, at her father, and giggled and nudged again. Ellen left the weekly paper lying prominently on the spot, when she and her father got up to return. If these girls came back that way, and saw it, they might pick it up, and, reading it, be enlightened as to the appearance of millionaires.

Next day she went out alone. Her father wanted to divide his attentions—take strolls one day with Ellen to keep her from feeling lonely, sit with his wife the next, and ask her every half-hour: “How’s the sciatica now?”

Again, in the evening, when Ellen returned, her father sniffed, and sniffed again.

“What is that scent ye have?” he asked.

"I haven't any scent," said Ellen. "Have I, mother?"

"I don't notice it, dear."

"It's like—what do you call it—gasoline, petrol, the stuff they use in motor-cars."

"Mr. Ramsay hasn't been back again, Ellen," remarked Mrs. Adair. "It is a week since we saw him."

"Who's Mr. Ramsay?" the father inquired.

"A customer of Hyke's," Mrs. Adair answered. "He made up on us in his car, one day, and lifted us home. Perhaps he'll be back again. You have a new cap, I see, father; and if he was to come and invite you, you could go out for a drive."

"Eh? Och, wumman, what would the likes of us do going out for a drive in the car of a customer at a shop where the lass worked?"

Mrs. Adair put down her knitting.

"I think I've dropped a stitch, and it's getting too dark to see," she said; and she sat with brows drawn down, lips making an "O" of meditation.

"Do ye ever notice how ye can hear the Tweed, at this time of the evening, kind of changing its notes?" Adair drawled. "It puzzles me for a reason—but it does change, right enough."

"It must be your imagination," said his wife.

"Maybe, maybe; but I think it is reasonable to consider that maybe the cessation——"

"That's a good word!" cried Ellen.

"—of the birds and the insects makes it more—I can't express it rightly. It makes me think of folks coming home. Did you ever read the song: 'I lay in my bedroom at Peebles, with the window-curtains drawn'?"

Ellen gave a laugh of mockery.

"Oh, father," she said, "you talk like a poet! 'I lay in my bedroom at Peebles, with the window-curtains drawn,' in the bed where last night slept our Tom."

Mrs. Adair laughed with delight. Mr. Adair laughed an odd little laugh.

"That's not a rime," said he.

"Indeed, I think it is," contradicted his wife.

"Well, maybe, maybe. No, it's not. 'Drawn' and 'Tom.' No, no; it's not a rime."

"Why, he's serious!" exclaimed Ellen.

"Here's the postman," said Mrs. Adair. "Run and meet him, Ellen."

There was no letter from Ramsay. There were picture post-cards from Ellen's holidaying friends, and a letter from Louise to her mother. This Mrs. Adair read indoors, under the lamp.

"That girl!" she said to her husband, who had come pottering after her. "It's a disappointing world. Fancy Louise telling me she must write a long letter because she feels so worried about Ellen! It's long enough! She thinks she should tell me to take care of Ellen, for Ellen has no firm basis, nothing—what does she say?" She looked at the letter again. "'Nothing firm to rest upon.' Louise will be joining the feminists next!"

"She'll not do that," said Mr. Adair. "She was sitting the other night, saying what she thought of them, and telling me about some that came into the shop. 'It's not more freedom such women want,' she says, 'but to get punished at the school for all kinds of meanness, such as telling tales on each other, and looking down their noses in a bunch at some girl among them that shows individuality. And they should be taught that there's nothing to giggle over about a confinement, and the women that teach them, and their mothers, should put better ideas into a lassie's head, so that she'll not be conceited about it if a man prizes her beyond her real value, but be proud of——'"

"What! She talks to her father like that? Oh, that's these books! Fancy mentioning the word 'confinement' to——"

"Well, there is such a thing, wife. And Louise is a fine lass, turning out. I can sit and crack wi' her for hours, and listen to her wi' great pleasure. She's making good use of her——"

"Oh—crack! There's too much cracking in that girl. Here she is telling me, her mother, to look after Ellen. She tells me she can't sleep for worrying about her. Well, after that! And on the very day she went back to Edinburgh she told me to let Ellen alone a little more. That girl's getting ridiculous!"

"She's all right," said Mr. Adair. "She's a fine lass."

"Och!" said Mrs. Adair.

CHAPTER XX

AFTER coming home from Peebles, Ellen was not exactly cheerier—bolder, perhaps; but there were other things to think of than the looks of the girls.

It seemed as if after the dog-days there came the beginning of troubles. Mr. Adair had news to tell which boded ill for the future. Despite the increase of salary he had received that year, his employer now began a series of retrenchments. One of the under-porters was discharged. The style of business seemed to be changing, and Mr. Adair's employer, like Mr. Adair, was too old to change, too old to adapt himself to the new modes.

Toward the end of October, the old man said, rather lugubriously: "I think the boss was trying to hint to me to-day that my salary might have to come down to the old figure again. I hope not."

There seemed to be a shadow on the house. Though a good many of Tom's friends still, on their way to the swimming-baths, looked in for him, and, after a swimming-contest, dropped in to supper, they were not as numerous as in the old days. The evening gatherings did not "come off" so well as of yore.

Jimmie Ray had ceased, apparently, to call. Perhaps, thought Mrs. Adair, that helped to make Ellen different. A pretty thing, to call every week for two years, and give handsome presents, and then drop off! A man might compromise a girl so. No present, no card even, came from him at New Year time.

Perhaps that was what made Ellen take fits of weeping. She grew morose, petulant. She wanted to have a room to herself, too, and frequently voiced a wish that they had a bigger house. One bright spot was that Walter Lane called often, not as if it were a habit, certainly, on stated nights of the week, but he called often, and Louise and he would go to a chamber-concert, or to a lecture at the Philosophical Institution, or—incongruous though it may seem to some—to a picture-palace, when any "riding" films were announced.

Either Mrs. Adair had learnt to abstain from questions about "intentions," or else a growing dignity in Louise—though it was not precisely the "dignity" that the mother had striven to teach—made Mrs.

Adair tread softly, treat her daughter's private affairs with the respect that is generally considered due to one who is not a relative. Or perhaps Mrs. Adair was satisfied with the way the affair was progressing. If it was not to lead to marriage with Lane, a professional man, at any rate Louise was not losing anything by his attentions. When, later on, instead of the visits, came letters in Lane's handwriting, Mrs. Adair adopted a casual note in her voice, enquiring if he was again out of Edinburgh. He had gone to London, it appeared, but he evidently did not forget Louise. Mrs. Adair wondered what on earth he found to write about, for a letter came from him every day.

But still the shadow was on the house. There was no laughter from the girls' room (that room of the walnut dressing-table with the swinging, beveled mirror, and the walnut, mirrored wardrobe), into which women, visiting the Adairs, had been ushered by their hostess to remove their hats, in a manner that suggested: "This will show you how stylish we are!" There was a changed atmosphere in the room. It had lost some sparkle. It was like a banquet-chamber when the guests have gone. It was like a gay coach in a museum, instead of in a procession. The girls did not find it a pleasant room now. It was a place in which to weep—looked upon by stolid, blinking furniture.

Ellen became so nervous, that the twinkling of light in the beveled edges of the mirrors would make her jump and turn, thinking a great moth fluttered round her. The polished walnut was no longer gleaming and rich to Louise; it was funereal.

For she had found out Ellen's secret. On the night of the discovery, there was not a word exchanged after the "Ellen! Why—you——" and the "Yes, couldn't you see before?" as of one indignant that the inevitable discovery had been so long deferred. Louise lay awake longer even than her sister, staring at the ceiling, turning and staring into the black corners, her arm outstretched, till she found the sleeve had gone up in the movement, and the uncovered forearm was numb with cold.

In the morning, Ellen said suddenly: "Are you going to tell?"

She was brushing her hair, the long, coarse strands upheld by the brush.

Louise could never forget her as she paused so, and turned, and discharged the question. It was not a frightened query. She did not answer at once.

"Have you some fool's plan in your head? Are you going to speak or not?" Ellen asked.

"No, no—I won't tell," said Louise.

"Oho!" said Ellen, and brushed on.

In the evening, the mother noticed the constraint between the girls. She had a private note upon it, considering that they were growing apart. They all seemed to be growing apart, the whole family. The change had begun at Peebles, when Louise had said that she thought girls should be left alone more, be their own mistresses—something like that.

Mrs. Adair could not fail to think (though God forbid that she should gloat upon the fact) that if Louise had intended to hold her mother off, and to inculcate in Ellen's mind a belief that mothers should be held aloof, then she was reaping the punishment, the fitting punishment; for Louise, it seemed to her, was being held aloof by Ellen now. Well, it was none of her business. Had she not been told not to meddle?

Next evening, Louise turned to Ellen, once, to try to speak, after they were together in their room, and could not. Ellen's air was too much that of one impervious to speech. But at last Louise walked directly to her, and held out her arms.

"Ellen," she said, "can't I do anything?"

Ellen looked at her sister from under drooping lids.

"You can't do anything," she answered. "I'll just have to wait. I hope it dies."

"But, Ellen, does he know?" Louise broke out, strained.

"Who know?"

"The—father."

"Father!"

Louise caught her elbow, looked in her eyes.

"If I had come with you that day, could I—would this have been prevented, dear?"

"I don't know. Perhaps," Ellen cruelly replied.

Louise was like one hearing a physician hazard the date of death.

Then Ellen repented of that reply.

"Och, don't be a fool, Louise," she cried. "Prevented! If I had wanted I could have had him for a husband easy."

"You—could—have——"

"Yes. He wanted me to stay with him in a hotel in—in a town we went to one day in the car——" She paused, and looked at her sister thoughtfully. "I would have stayed, too, if mother and father had known I was with him. I'd have stayed for all night in a hotel—wired that we'd broken down—if it hadn't been for making them suspicious. I hadn't told them I was meeting

him, you see. And then—then I could have the law on him now, don't you see?"

Louise shook her head, mute.

"Well, he'd have had to register us as 'Mr. and Mrs.,' and the hotel register would have done the trick. Oh, yes, there was a girl caught a lord like that, took it to law, and the law was with her. She was his wife all right, for they were down as man and wife in three hotel registers."

"How awful! She couldn't have loved him," Louise said, though she was thinking little of this law-case. Her words were almost subconscious. She was in agony over her sister.

"Love him!" Ellen scoffed. "He had cheapened her. Oh, a clever woman can do an awful lot. He hadn't reckoned on the hotel books and the Scots law. She had a great time after that. Why, she could do what she liked, so long as she kept an eye on him. And the fun of it all is that he divorced her afterwards—she went off with another man. His family never got over it. But Ramsay was no *nab*. I spotted, just before we left Peebles, that he had hired the car——"

Louise did not ask how her sister had "spotted" this. She threw herself down on the bed and wept. She was in an abyss of misery, blent with grief, because of these sordid and heartless complications and revelations.

"Oh, I used to laugh at the way you made a fool of men," she sobbed, "and it was to lead to this. I should have gone in the car. I should have gone in the car!"

"Do shut up, do stop crying! Mother'll hear."

Another night, Louise shook Ellen's arm, sometime in the dark, chill, bitter-chill hour before dawn, the hour when old people die, and young people, if they waken, feel the vastness of the unknown.

"What is it?" said Ellen. "What is it?"

"Ellen, Ellen! Are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Properly awake?"

"Yes."

"Wide awake?"

"Yes, yes. What is it? What's wrong?"

"Tell me this, Ellen. Do you think Ramsay loved you—I mean apart from passion? Would he marry you? Why don't you write to him?"

"Well—oh, Lord! Wakening me up. It's difficult enough to get to sleep anyhow. You're hysterical!"

“But Ellen, Ellen, listen——”

“I hate him!”

“But I’ve read that women often do hate their—husbands—just before the baby comes. After—could you not—he should know—it is as much a point for his honor——”

“Och, you’ve read—read! I tell you I don’t even know where he lives. If I’d known this kid was coming I would have stayed at that hotel.”

Louise wept till morning came, and the rattle of milk-carts sounded in the hard, cobbled streets, and the cable began to thrash and hum in Marchmont Road, and a pallid, sad light crept slowly brighter, and she heard her father at his early work of cleaning the flues in the kitchen, for in winter the gas-stove was but an auxiliary to the range. Then the growing light stayed, waned, and the dawn was submerged in a yellow-red fog.

CHAPTER XXI

A FEW mornings later, after the family had gone to work, Ellen had such a fit of weeping that her mother argued and badgered her into hat and coat, and carried her off to a doctor. He listened to an oration of the symptoms, and, looking at the tiger's head upon his hearthrug, said he would examine Ellen. He sounded her; he listened long and thoughtfully through his stethoscope. Then he turned and looked sharply at Mrs. Adair, and remarked:

"It's nothing dangerous, you understand? I think you had better send for me about"—he paused, and fixed her eye—"three months from now."

He thought the mother did understand him, by the startled look she gave, but she did not. She was only wondering what complaint he suspected might be developing in her daughter. But before the three months of waiting and wondering were over, Louise began to look so wan, worn, spiritless, that Mrs. Adair feared the disease, whatever it was, must be infectious.

What strategies of drapery, what painful tight-lacings must have been resorted to by Ellen! Mrs. Adair had yet no faintest impression of the truth. Then, one morning, early in April (when the revolving chimney-pots screamed, and the telegraph-wires shrieked like demented elves, and people at cross-streets, encountering the wind, dug hands in coat-pockets and shuddered), a wild blustering morning, after Louise and Tom and Mr. Adair had departed, the sound of Ellen's sobs came from the drawing-room.

Mrs. Adair hastened thither and found the girl, feather-duster in drooping hand, lying on the sofa, sobbing her heart out.

"What is it, Ellen?" cried the mother. "This is terrible! You must have a doctor."

"I won't have a doctor!" Ellen sobbed. "I don't want a doctor!"

"But you will have a doctor!"

Mrs. Adair ran off, undoing her long morning-wrapper, threw it into the kitchen in passing, and quickly she drew on her coat, pinned on her hat. Then, carrying Ellen's outdoor things, and a mixed handful of hatpins picked up from the dressing-table in the girls' room (the ones of the Iona marble tops, of the filigree silver, of the enamel), she marched into the sitting-room and stood over her daughter, who had half risen, tear-stained.

“Come along,” said Mrs. Adair. “Put on your hat and coat.”

Ellen rose, and arrayed herself for the street, affixing her hat before the overmantel-mirror in a listless fashion.

“Where are the keys?” said Mrs. Adair. “Oh, yes, I know.”

She ran to the kitchen and snatched the front-door key from its nail, left a kettle on the lit stove, not noticing it, and away they went to the doctor—a ruffling, anxious figure in “stylish” clothes, like a clucking and garish hen, a pathetic figure fluttering alongside like a wet ribbon.

“I’ve brought my daughter back,” said Mrs. Adair, when they found themselves in the somber consulting-room. “You told me you would like to see her about this time.”

“Oh, yes,” said the doctor, and looked at Mrs. Adair under his brows, sharply, and with a faint wonder. “Just lie down on this couch, please,” he said to Ellen.

“She has her weeping-fits again,” explained the mother. “This morning, at least, she had one. Terrible weeping! And she seems to have pains. Is it anything——”

The doctor felt Ellen’s pulse, put his stethoscope to her side, she submitting in a strained way, looking at neither her mother nor the examiner, looking at a corner of the ceiling, biting her lips, eyes fixed.

He listened attentively, then turned and walked away, hands behind back, half across his room, the stethoscope dangling, wheeled there, and came back.

“You had better get her home as soon as possible,” he said to Mrs. Adair, who looked from Ellen to him. “The baby will be here soon—probably by to-night.”

Mrs. Adair’s mouth opened. A strangled scream came from her. She turned to Ellen.

“You——” she began. “You——” she tried again. “I——” she made a third attempt.

She stood over her daughter, trembling, seeking for words.

Dr. MacIntyre put his hand on her arm.

“Madam,” he said, in a parade-rasp kind of accent, that brought her round to look at him. And then, very firmly: “I must tell you not to excite her,” he counseled. “Compose yourself. She must not be excited. Are you composed?”

Mrs. Adair drew in and expelled a quivering breath. So did Ellen.

"That's better," said the doctor. "Keep so till after the event, and for some time. Don't excite her. Send for me."

They walked out. Neither turned to acknowledge the opening of the door for them. They found themselves going down clean steps into a hooting day, into screaming wind, and flying newspapers blown from baskets of message-boys, and wind-blown cries of shuddering coal-men, things going on as usual.

A cab was passing, and Mrs. Adair, with a sudden resolve that stiffened her, hailed it.

"Get in," she said, and gave an address, in Gorgie, to the driver.

"It's nothing smittle, is it?" said he, holding hat and whip in firm clutch—"smittle" meaning infectious.

"No!" Mrs. Adair snapped at him.

The driver looked at Ellen more carefully.

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, yes, ma'am."

There was no word spoken in the cab. There was just the rattle of the wheels over the cobbles, and of the joggling windows.

Here was humiliation indeed for Mrs. Adair, when, after an eternity of din, they arrived, deafened and stunned, at a mean street in Gorgie. Here was humiliation—to have to come and crave shelter at the house of a sister who was never mentioned at Crown Street, a poverty-ridden sister, who received each new year a New Year card from Mrs. Adair, and, now and then, at long intervals, a brief note: "Wondering how you are, and hoping you are well." She had married a railway-man. Accidents had punctuated his labors, till Mrs. Todd began to be accustomed to the cab at the door, to heavy steps coming up the narrow, stone stairs. One day he was brought home dead; and she had continued to live on in Gorgie, on a small annuity from the railway company, and a lodger's weekly payments.

The arrival of the cab took her back to old days. It was like *him* being brought home again. She was not a woman to triumph openly. She felt only that this was fitting—this subdued air of suing, with which her sister approached her. For Mrs. Adair had had her head turned by a four-room-and-kitchen flat; and when she left that flat, and went to Crown Street, and had hot and cold water at the sink, and hot and cold water in the bathroom, "turned" was not the word for the condition of her head. And here she was, craving sanctuary for her daughter, because that flighty girl had come by what is, in an access of irony or pity, called a "love-child."

"Any expense there is, you let me know," said Mrs. Adair, ending her broken, halting explanation and appeal, Ellen standing like a smitten deer

beside her. "I'll send a postal order for thirty shillings when I get home, and more will follow. And so long as Ellen's with you, if you will take her——"

"Go away wi' ye! I'll have to take the price from you that I would from a lodger, for money's not very free with me, but I canna be unchristian—if her mother is. Away wi' ye, and leave her to me. As for the future—we'll see what we see."

But they both had to attend to Ellen then, for the excitement and the jolting had hastened the birth. When Mrs. Adair, ashen and staring, left the house in Gorgie, another child had been born into this mysterious world.

CHAPTER XXII

MRS. ADAIR returned to Crown Street to find her husband and her remaining daughter standing on the doorstep in a state of suspense, anxiety. Mr. Adair had, of course, forgotten his own key that morning. He had a knife in his hand, brilliantly inspired to try and slip back the catch of the window of the front room, and make entrance there.

"See that you don't cut your hand," said Louise, cautioning. "Oh—here's mother."

Mrs. Adair marched into the tiny "garden," walked up to the diminutive porch, between Louise and her husband, with a visage that silenced both, and put her key in the lock.

"Forgotten your key!" she snapped at her husband, glaring at him. Then, turning to her daughter: "I warn you. Don't talk to me—not a word!"

"Where's Ellen?" asked Adair. "What's the matter, woman?"

His wife held up an open hand, as if it was a knife, and she was cleaving something in the air.

"Ellen is where I know," she said, speaking low and vigorous.

The house into which she now gave them admission was permeated by a choking odor.

"What's that smell?" asked Adair.

A detonation sounded from the kitchen.

"Oh, what's that?" cried Louise, and ran, timid and courageous all at once, into the kitchen.

The kettle, that had boiled dry, had cracked and fallen asunder on the gas-stove. The gas-flames had not been extinguished by the earlier boiling-over.

The mother followed Louise, and made that gesture again.

"Why didn't you tell me?" she said, sawing the air with her hand, between each word.

"I couldn't tell you," Louise almost moaned. "Where is she?"

"She is where I know—and there she stays."

"But what—what——" began Adair.

“Oh, you *sumph*!” cried his wife. “After all I’ve done, and suffered, and striven——”

She would not let herself weep. She closed her lips tightly.

Louise put out the gas under the ruined kettle, acting instinctively.

“Yes, you can think to do that,” said her mother. “Why didn’t you go in the car with her? You could have prevented it.”

Louise sat down and stared.

“I’ve been telling myself that ever since,” she wailed.

“Now, now,” said Mr. Adair. “What’s this? Where’s Ellen? It’s never—it’s never—was *yon* the meaning of her being ill? It canna be. Tell me. Say it to me.”

“Och!” said Mrs. Adair.

“Louise, you tell me. Say it to me. She’s got a baby!”

Louise nodded.

“No, but tell me so that I can be sure. Say to me, ‘She’s had a baby.’ ”

“She’s had a baby,” said Mrs. Adair, in a low, bitter voice.

“Ellen has,” said he.

“Ellen,” said Mrs. Adair.

He turned to Louise.

“What did you know of this?” he asked. “You knew? And you didn’t tell me, so that I could go and see him? Oh, Jimmie Ray—Walker and Ray—Jewelers and Opticians!”

“Father, father!” cried Louise. “Be calm. It wasn’t Jimmie—it wasn’t Jimmie Ray. But I didn’t know until it was too late. Oh, mother——”

“Don’t you talk to me!” Mrs. Adair said, her head quivering left and right.

“I will! I told you to take care of her. But I was afraid, that day she went away alone——”

“It was at Peebles?” said Mr. Adair.

They both nodded.

“Now——”

Something of calm seemed upon him. His ludicrous legs came together.

“Am I the master in this house?” he asked. “Begin at the beginning, and tell me. It was at Peebles. Tell me about the car.”

Mrs. Adair was on the point of hissing another “Och!” at him; but instead, “I told you,” said she. “I told you that a customer of Hyke’s had

given us a lift in his car.”

“I remember. But what could happen, with you along?”

“He came back. He came back to take us for a drive, and I couldn’t go. I had my attack of sciatica.”

“Ye had, had ye? What was it ye said when ye came in just now, about all ye had done, and plotted, and striven? Ye had your sciatica, and so you let her go away with a—with a customer—a customer of Hyke’s!”

“I should have gone,” sobbed Louise.

“Let your mother speak first. It’s for me to disentangle this and get to the bottom of it. How long was she away?”

“A long while,” said Mrs. Adair, as if replying to a voice of judgment coming out of the vacancy into which she stared. Then suddenly she cast off the spell put upon her by her husband. “Oh, who are you to—what did you ever plan for? Not another word will I speak.” Then, slow and deliberate: “She’s out of the house.”

“What’s she out of the house for? What right have you to take her out of the house?”

“You fool, for Louise’s sake! I’ve to think of Louise’s chances, now, at this pass.”

“That settles it!” cried Louise. “She comes back at once, if that’s your reason.”

“There’s no use saying that,” said Mrs. Adair, “for the child’s born already. I left her—where I left her, with a child. She can’t be moved. And if you”—she turned to her husband with a motion almost of triumph—“if you think it makes no difference that one of the girls has——”

“Now, now,” Mr. Adair broke out. “What I want is information. I’ve been in the dark all my life. What is the man’s name?”

“Ramsay,” said Louise. “Robert Ramsay. He was staying at a house called Five Gables.”

“How did you know so much?”

“I asked him, father, when he came for Ellen and mother to go for a drive.”

“Ellen and mother, Ellen and mother, you say, not Ellen and you?”

“He wanted me to go, but I wouldn’t. Oh, I did try to keep Ellen,” but this Louise said not as in defense, but in anguish.

“It’s true, it’s true,” said Mrs. Adair. “I thought it was a chance for her. I thought he was serious, maybe. Oh, this is all my fault!”

"No, no, mother, I should have gone," Louise cried out.

"He didn't come for you, you tell me?" said Mr. Adair. "He came for Ellen and your mother."

He turned to his wife.

"You're not a mother at all," he said. "Style, style, style! Do ye ken the name for you? You're a procu—procu—procurator! You're a——" He paused, choking. "Do ye think marriage is a lang hoordom?" he asked, speaking slowly, and with unwonted vigor. "Damn ye, ye have egged your daughter to this, you with your style and your——" He stuck again, swallowed, and broke out: "And a man doesn't want a hoor for a wife! Teach a lass to sing comic songs, and dress her up, and yatter to her about how bonnie she looks! What for? For to catch a man? If ye're fishing for men, do ye think a man is a kind of travellin' stallion, hoorin' through the countryside? Deck up your mare and feed her till she whinnies! When ye pulled me out o' the wee hoose in the sooth back o' the Canongate—up to the High Street, and then doon to Pilrig, and syne up here, for the lo-cality—locality!" he shouted, "what was it for? What was it for? To mak' a strumpet o' ma daughter! And now that I think o't, ye told me she went out with him *once*. Do ye mind the smell of petrol I smelt? You could not smell it, says you. Smell it! She was out wi' him in his car while you was sitting wi' me, and—— Oh, my God!" And Mr. Adair reeled and fell.

"Oh, the neighbors, the neighbors will hear!" cried Mrs. Adair in anguish.

CHAPTER XXIII

LOUISE, more by instinct than by reason, opened the front door, hearing Tom's knock.

"I'm late," he began; and then: "Hullo, Louise!" And next, seeing her terrible expression of woe: "What is it?"

She thrust her hand against his breast.

"Run for a doctor, Tom!"

"What for? Who is it? What——"

"For father, quick."

Tom hastened away, and she returned dazed again, forgetting to shut the door, returned dumb, and with the anguished haste of one overwhelmed in a disaster that has been long expected.

She found her mother trying to lift Mr. Adair; and, she aiding, they dragged him to a sitting posture against a chair. They were thus employed, panting and struggling, when Tom came in, heavy and urgent, the doctor behind him, the same doctor who had prophesied to Mrs. Adair regarding Ellen, and had not been understood.

He comprehended the situation at a glance. The father had had a shock; some people take these things seriously. This thing, "grown upon with hair like grass," with skull, vertebræ, and abdomen, this thing of skin and bone, tissue and nerves, veins and arteries, knee-caps in their sockets, and elbows in theirs, pumping heart, filtering lungs—this thing does grow agitated over the events of life, and the body often fails under the stress of emotions in some inner place, where resides something that is not to be dissected upon the dripping table of the operating-room. Dr. MacIntyre saw many such sights, doctoring ailments brought on by anxieties, or agonies of that thing within, which, when it departs, leaves the body meaningless again.

"He took it badly," he thought, as Tom and he carried Mr. Adair to the back bedroom.

The two women followed, and Tom and they clustered, waiting, while the doctor loosened the old man's collar and listened for his heart-beats, the dicky sticking out on either side of Adair's head, as if he wore blinkers.

"I'll come round myself with something," said Dr. MacIntyre, drawing erect again. "Where is the girl?" He looked at Louise. "The other girl, I mean."

"She's away—out of the house," replied Mrs. Adair.

The doctor looked at Louise fixedly, much as an engineer looks, at times, upon the dial of his steam-gauge.

"That's very sensible," he said. "In good hands, of course? You didn't excite her?"

"No. She is in good hands," Mrs. Adair answered, in a low voice, oddly grim.

"She's better away," said MacIntyre.

He walked over to Louise and put his hand on her shoulder.

"My dear young lady," he said, "every cloud has its silver lining."

She burst into tears, as he desired, and he nodded to Mrs. Adair.

"I shall come back myself very shortly," he said to Louise. "You go and lie down, my dear. I shall see you when I come back."

"What is it?" Tom asked, staring in horror amid the sudden cataclysm. "What's happened? Where's Ellen? What's taken father? What's it all about?"

"Your sister has had a baby," said the doctor sharply. "Now, young man, don't you break out! Your father has taken it badly. You had better take it standing up."

He departed hurriedly, and Tom sat down on his father's bed. Louise stopped weeping. Indeed, she had but begun, when suddenly the tears ceased, and she was again like one turned to stone. Tom said nothing. That stolid youth felt that silence, wooden silence, was the only condition in which to receive all this. He was like a ninepin that had been knocked down abruptly, and abruptly picked up again.

"I had better get to work," he said, heavily, moved by an inspiration of unselfishness, what imagination he possessed having awakened to show him a possible future in which somebody in the house would need to continue to earn a living. "I'll rush home," he promised the heedless women. "I'll be awful anxious all afternoon, but it's a wise course of action."

Louise and Mrs. Adair were hardly aware that he had arrived, taken his small share in the day's upheaval, and departed. The doctor might have been summoned by God, instead of by Tom.

As he went out, Tom met MacIntyre, and gave him entrance.

For three weeks thereafter, Dr. MacIntyre called daily. But after the first fortnight, the frequency of the visits was for Louise's sake; for Mr. Adair recovered from his nervous collapse more speedily than his daughter from her final breakdown, that had come after weeks of suspense, self-condemnation and many blent agonies. Louise had had these weeks of strain to undermine her before the calamity was manifest, and in the manifestation it smote left and right, and thrust before, like a sharp, two-edged sword.

The doctor came near losing his temper, for he was very well conscious of a temper over this dilatoriness of Louise's system to be moved again with vitality. If actually he was not in a temper, the temper was assuredly in him. He thought he knew all the cause of her breakdown, and did not consider it sufficient to leave her so impervious to his tonic drugs. But once, when he entered the Crown Street house, Mrs. Adair opening to him, he heard Louise in her room talking to herself. The voice came into the corridor in sepulchral tones of delirium.

"Come back!" she called. "Wait for me! Oh, wait for me! I'll get my hat and coat. She mustn't go in the car alone! She shouldn't go at all, mother. She's gone! Oh, she's gone! The car's away!"

"Does this happen often?" asked the hearkening doctor, looking down on Mrs. Adair under his tufted and hanging eyebrows as if she were guilty of keeping something from him, or of being a fool in his eyes.

"Yes," she responded.

He merely growled in his throat, and passed quietly into the bedroom to see the patient.

But on another day, when he arrived, Louise was calling out: "Where's Ellen? Oh, yes, the doctor said it's better for her to be away." There followed a deal of incoherent talk, and anon, after that incoherence: "Is she all right, mother? I know the doctor says it's better for her to be away." The tone of the voice that cried so was of fever. Then, suddenly, came a broken cry of: "Walter!"

"Is that the brother's name?" Dr. MacIntyre inquired sharply, almost leering at Mrs. Adair under his disheveled brows.

"No," the mother replied, in a whisper. Louise's voice made her feel almost afraid.

"Sweethearts?" snapped the doctor.

"Yes. At least I think they are—I think they have some understanding. I don't know if they are engaged."

"Well, whether they are or not, you send for him," he said in tones of command. "Does he know she's ill? Has he come to inquire for her?" he

rapped out.

“No, he hasn’t come for weeks. I think he’s in London. But if he heard about Ellen, perhaps he——”

“What?” MacIntyre snarled. “Don’t you believe it! Don’t measure his corn in your bushel. Send for him. He will be as valuable to her recovery as I—confound her!” He paused. “I thought,” said he, beginning again, “that she had only her sister on her mind.”

“I’ll send for him,” said Mrs. Adair, in a subdued voice that had the suggestion of tears. “She has given me to understand, I must tell you, she has given me to understand that I have nothing to do with her friendship with him, or whatever it is.” She nodded her head in a hard little nod. Her mouth showed grim lines. “I am quite in the dark.”

The doctor listened to Mrs. Adair’s remark and thought his own thoughts.

“Well, you send for Walter,” said he.

“And have him go in and sit with her?” asked Mrs. Adair, upon whom all the recent agonies and nursings, and sense of the ineffectuality of her hopes, were beginning to tell.

“My good lady,” replied Dr. MacIntyre, “if I told you to give the patient a poultice, would you stick it up on the wall, or hang it on the chandelier? When this Walter arrives, you send him in to see her. I assure you that if he were a sex-maniac, or a devil from hell, he would not seduce your daughter in such pathetic circumstances.”

Mrs. Adair’s world was turning. She had lived according to her lights, and her lights seemed darkness. She did not know what to say. She could hardly tell this man of degrees and medicinal knowledge—to say nothing of the Latin words in which he shrouded the simplicity of that knowledge from vulgar eyes upon prescriptions—she could hardly say to him: “Doctor, you are very coarse. I think of nothing so horrible. And I must ask you to excuse yourself.” She could only remain weary and wondering at the whirling of the universe.

At that very moment, there was an urgent, though subdued, summons on the glass door. The mother turned, and, startled, she saw who stood outside, beyond the colored glasses, all vivid blues and orange.

“Why, here he is!” she ejaculated.

The doctor made two steps past her to the door. He was the rudest man imaginable, she thought. This might have been his own house, from the way he behaved in it. He opened the door—and Walter Lane looked at him, he at Walter.

“Louise *ill*?” asked Lane.

“Your name Walter?” said the physician.

“Yes. What is——”

“She wants to see you,” said MacIntyre. He caught Lane’s elbow, as that anxious lover entered. “Half-a-minute! She is all right. Don’t look so horrified when you clap eyes on her—she won’t die. But—I say—why the deuce did you not come before?”

“Just home—came home—specially from London—no letters—where is she?”

“Half-a-minute,” said the doctor again; and Mrs. Adair’s mind, if it reeled before, reeled more amazingly now, for MacIntyre said, plump and plain: “Her sister has had a baby.”

Walter looked at him abruptly, his eyebrows going up. Then he made a bow and turned again.

“In here?” he asked. “How do you do, Mrs. Adair? In here? Where is she?”

“Yes, in there,” answered MacIntyre; and then, to the stupefied mother: “I’ll go and have a look at the old man first.”

Mrs. Adair retreated to the kitchen, to stare out of the window at the veering smoke of far chimneys against a cold sky, and to fumble with her wrapper and feel old and broken and helpless.

The doctor sat on a chair beside Mr. Adair’s bed, his head turned, ears alert for sounds from Louise’s room. He heard, at last, Walter’s voice upraised with: “Damn it all, do you think——” He could not catch what Lane indignantly asked Louise if she had the faithlessness or the folly to think, but it seemed to MacIntyre that this interview might be beneficial, tonic, stimulating. When he was considering if perhaps it had not lasted long enough, and might be exciting instead of tonic, he heard the faintest, tenuous laugh, blent with weeping. He rose at that.

“You’re getting on very well, Mr. Adair,” he said.

“Doctor,” said the old man, holding up a detaining hand, a poor, scraggy, long-fingered hand.

“Yes?” there was almost contempt in MacIntyre’s voice.

“I think I could get up now. I’ve remembered what you said about the necessity for absolute rest, if I hope to be of service. But I’ve schooled myself to *ca-lamity* now, and I think I would be better up and on the road to Gorgie to see—Ellen like. The wife told me where she is.”

MacIntyre sat down again.

"Told you?" he inquired. "Do you mean that you did not know where she was all the time—that your wife took her away without letting you know where she had taken her, and that you—what do you mean?"

"Aye, that was the worst of it. She did it for the best, of course—that was the worst of it," said this rambling and ineffectual invalid. "That was one bad bit of it, what made me lose my head, I think."

"Had you to press her to tell?"

"No, she told me as soon as I came to."

The doctor scratched his crown slowly, making a long grimace with lips and nostrils, as if he had scented some evil odor. Then he rose, with a half sigh, half puff of disgust.

"I'll see how your daughter is, before going," he said.

He passed then into the corridor.

"Mrs. Adair there?" he called.

She came speedily from the kitchen.

"I'll see your daughter now," he said. "But, by the way, Mrs. Adair, does she know—or does she not, damn it all—where the girl you brought round to me *is*? Have you told her?"

Mrs. Adair evidently understood what he asked.

"No, I have not," she replied. "She never asks. She just stares at me. She never asks."

"Do you know, Mrs. Adair," said MacIntyre, his hat against his chest, and bending over her, "do you know, by any chance, the meaning of the Scots word 'thrawn'?"

She nodded. She was like a child, afraid, or overawed, before the school-head.

"I have a patient on my beat," said he, speaking slowly (it was a whim of his to call his "rounds" his "beat"), "an old, old woman she is. She died three days ago, and she is living yet. Do you understand that? She is really dead, but her heart keeps beating. She's got the hardest heart I ever saw. And she's dying lonely and unloved. Her physical heart is hard; and so is her heart in the other sense. If it wasn't that I believe that through pathology we get an idea of motives better than through psychology, I would be sick of humanity sometimes. Maybe there's a pathologic explanation for *thrawnness*. Didn't it strike you that your daughter wanted to know where her sister was?" Mrs. Adair only fumbled with her brooch. "I shouldn't be surprised if she thought it was in vain to ask you."

"I expect she did," the mother acknowledged. "She asked—yon day—and I wouldn't tell her. I did it for her sake, I did indeed, doctor. It was for her sake I did it."

"Aye," he sighed. "Well, perhaps you'd better tell her now. What do you think?"

"Perhaps I had better."

She knocked at Louise's door, knocked like a stranger in the house, the doctor looking upon her with pensive expression.

"Louise, I've thought it better to tell you that Ellen's with my sister, your aunt, Mrs. Todd, in Gorgie," said Mrs. Adair, standing in the doorway.

Louise, slightly raised upon pillows, looked with great eyes at her mother.

"Walter has just suggested that," said she, in a voice that MacIntyre considered more hopeful.

"After you, Mrs. Adair," said he, advancing from the corridor, and touched her shoulder lightly with his fingers (like a god forgiving), thrusting her before him; and he entered the bedroom to feel the pulse, take the temperature, note the improvement of his patient, lest, peradventure, the improvement was, after the tardiness of its beginning, too sudden and excessive.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHAT happened when Walter entered Louise's room was, firstly, a gaze from her upon him such as a shipwrecked mariner might bestow upon his rescuers, if he had seen no sail upon all the sea at close of the preceding day, and waked to find his rescuers at his very side. Great joy showed on her face.

"Louise!"

His voice showed that to him she was the most sacred and beloved woman in the world, and his unconscious gesture, stooping over her, was all of pity and of love.

"You know?" she said, looking upon him and feeling him more closely friend and lover than ever, as though a lost and stronger part of her had come back.

"Yes, yes," he replied.

He sat down upon the bed, hiding, masking, as best he could, the fear that he felt at sight of her wan face. He could have wept. It was well (for her) that MacIntyre had cautioned him, before he entered, not to show a startled expression at the change that had come upon her. And for him it was also well that MacIntyre had assured him that she was not in the very article of death.

"Now, Louise," he said, "don't talk if you don't want to. And if you do want to talk, then do; but whatever you do—know that all's well."

"You love me?" she asked.

"I thought you knew that," he said, and took her hand, which she let lie in his. "I know what's on your mind, Louise," he added.

"You do! Did mother——"

"The doctor told me," he assured her. "Oh, you poor girl!" For, despite the doctor's assurance, he was cold with a sudden dread of losing her. It seemed to him that Death had sent this pallor to her, this emaciation. "You must get better, dear, soon, as soon as you can; and we'll be married as soon as you are up again; and we'll go away to some quiet place of trees and the sky and——"

"Oh, you mustn't speak of it, Walter. Do, do listen to me." She drew her hand away. "I can't tell you"—she hesitated, in some mental or spiritual agony—"I love you—I do love you—you know that. No woman has ever loved any man so much."

"Well, then, what's the matter with you?"

"Listen, Walter, listen. It's not easy to say, but I must."

"I'm listening. You'd better get it off your chest."

"Listen, then."

"Yes." He took her hand again.

"Oh, I've lain here, longing for you to come back, but I wouldn't even ask Tom—I couldn't—to write to you. And, anyhow, I could only say to you ——" She hesitated, staring sadly before her.

"Say what, dearest?"

"About humanity, dear, about humanity," she almost wailed, torn with thoughts that had evidently been burning in her mind. "Just as people should hesitate to commit suicide, even when their lives are terrible, so should they hesitate to bring forth life, even when their lives are happy. Oh, I have thought of this so much; for months it has been growing. After we came back from Peebles, and you used to ask me (even before you went to London again) what I was thinking, it was all the worry about Ellen—and the baby, and *that*. Walter, you must go away from me and never——"

"Damn it all, do you think," he cried, taking her hands closer and looking into her eyes, "do you think it's anything but"—his voice grew lower—"love," he said quietly, "that I have to give you?"

She met his eyes, and searched them, and was content, glad beyond any gladness she had ever known.

"That's that," said he, at last. "But there's other worry on your mind. What is it?"

"About Ellen. I blame myself. I could have been with her and protected her—and yet—— Oh, I don't know." She began to weep again. "I don't know where she is now. I don't know where she is. Mother won't tell. But, oh, my poor, poor mother. I'm sorry for mother, too."

"Now, now," he said gently. "Don't begin to stare away into the caves of misery once more."

She laughed hysterically. She wept and laughed. She wept.

"You're swelling your dear nose with these tears. Do stop," he besought her, and he made an effort to laugh, in the hope that a laugh might be infectious. "Your mother sent her away?"

"Yes, took her away when we were all out—they alone."

"And she won't tell?"

"No. But mother has done her best. She really has. Poor mother. She doesn't understand. It makes it all the more hopeless and terrible."

Walter puckered his eyes, his brows.

"Relatives?" he asked. "Haven't you relatives in whose care she may be?"

"Relatives?"

"Yes. No moneyed relatives? No comfortable country relatives—that sort of thing?"

"No. Mother has a sister, that's all. She lives at Gorgie. I go and see her sometimes because I like her, and she's lonely. I'm sure mother wouldn't take Ellen there. Oh, mother has been mistaken a lot, a lot. Don't think ill of her, Walter. She's been a wonderful woman, in her own way."

"Well," said Lane, "I bet you, Louise, that your sister is with this relative. That's the way things often happen in this queer world, I think."

And at that came the feeble half-knocking, half-fumbling at the door, heralding the approach of Mrs. Adair, with drawn, pained lips, to say: "Louise, I've thought it better to tell you that Ellen is with my sister, your aunt. . . . Gorgie." Her voice was strained, and quavered. She seemed both broken and defiant.

Dr. MacIntyre followed her.

"Now, let me see you, my lady," he said. "Feeling better?"

Louise nodded an affirmative to this gruff alchemist, who changed the color of the world for so many; and there was gratitude, a friendly gratitude, in her eyes. She was, indeed, feeling better. Hope was again near her. If this waver of the wand could not bring the color of health to her cheeks, all in the space of half-an-hour, at any rate that look that she had worn for so long, a look that had seemed of resignation to a terrible fate, was gone. The doctor sat down and felt her pulse.

Then they all looked up in astonishment; for, in the doorway (trousers and waistcoat and jacket on, scraggy neck exposed) was Mr. Adair.

"I want a muffler, or a cravat, or something," he grumbled, "to put on my neck—a scarf. And where's ma boots?"

Everybody gasped.

"I have a premonition," he explained. "I have a premonition that I must not delay to go and bring Ellen back and put things right—as right as possible." He saw his wife's face. It showed horror at the thought of him

getting out of a bed of illness, to go on that long journey across the city. “For Louise’s sake,” he said. “For the child’s sake. For Ellen’s sake. Now, where’s ma boots?”

“Can he go?” asked Louise, anxiously.

The doctor’s face puckered. Under shaggy brows he considered Mr. Adair. He fingered his long, ironical jaw. He had a face reminiscent at times of that of Anatole France.

“Chance it!” he growled.

Mrs. Adair stared from one to the other.

“Now, now,” said the old man. “I’m determined. I have never been determined in my life before, but I’m determined. Put on your hat, mother. We’re going to Ellen.”

“But——”

“Put on your hat, wumman! It’s a pity for us we ever left the Wesleyan chapel. Put on your hat, wumman.”

Mrs. Adair looked at Lane, as if in the hope that he might negative this madness.

“It’s only right,” said he.

“But who’s to look after Louise?” asked the mother, feeling her throat, fumbling with her brooch, looking very old and worried.

“Couldn’t I sit with her till you come back?” asked Lane.

“Certainly,” replied Dr. MacIntyre.

CHAPTER XXV

THEY took car from Marchmont Road to the West End, Mrs. Adair sitting erect, blinking her eyes, the old man curved, like a sickle, on the seat, legs asprawl, forearms on thighs and hands pendent, but his face, as the Scots say, “dour” and determined. They boarded a Gorgie car at the West End; and in that they sat as they had sat in the first car, so that everybody in it, as in the former one, cast upon them awed glances, scenting tragedy.

Never a word they spoke, all the way, until Mr. Adair, puckering his eyes, and looking with bent head through the opposite window, saw that they were nearing their goal. He seemed like a great, loose rustic, sitting there. His father had been a countryman, and his father’s father, followers of the plow, believers in premonitions.

“Here we are. Stop at the next stop,” he said to the conductor.

“Take care of yourself, crossing,” warned Mrs. Adair, as they alighted, he standing at the step, she fussily following, the conductor with hand on bell-pull, ready to ring directly she touched earth.

Adair made no response. He took his wife’s elbow in a way he had not done for years, looked sharply to see that a car was not advancing upon the parallel line, and led her across the street.

“I ha’e a premonition,” he said, on coming to the pavement, speaking with a broad Scots accent, that took her back to the days of the Wesleyan chapel, when she thought she might make something of him. “I feel we’re going to hear bad news. I feel that you’ll have to brace yourself!”

She have to brace herself! They turned into a side-street, and passed rapidly along it, Mrs. Adair feeling uncannily perturbed by her husband’s tone.

“Here we are,” said he.

They entered a close that had no door at its end; they climbed a mildewed flight of stairs that smelt of cats; climbed another. There were three doors on each landing. They rang a bell and heard a baby weeping. The sound came nearer, and the voice of a woman hushing it.

The door opened, and the lugubrious jet of gas upon the landing—for there was no light in the corridor within—shone dimly on the face of Mrs.

Adair's poor relative, on the white square of her apron, and on the troubled face of the baby in the crook of her left arm.

"Oh, it's you. Come in," said Mrs. Todd, and they entered. "You've got my letter quickly."

"Your letter?" said Mrs. Adair, puzzled. "No—we just came down. What is it?"

"Why, she's gone."

"Gone!" cried the mother.

The old man had no word. He stood, loutish and uncouth, staring stupidly at Mrs. Todd.

"Yes."

"When did she go?" asked Mrs. Adair.

"Day before yesterday."

"Where did she go?" Mrs. Adair's voice ran hollow.

"How do I ken?"

"I had a premonition," said Mr. Adair, "but I didna ken it was like this."

They had followed Mrs. Todd into the kitchen, and he sat down on a broken chair; sat so close to the low gas-bracket that his hair was singed. The poor relative pushed the bracket back. He sat there in the attitude that had arrested the other travellers in the two cars; but the look of sanctified grimness was gone. He made a noise like a dog whining.

"She's killed herself!" he said at last. "She's killed herself! She's gone and committed suicide!"

Then Mrs. Todd had an inspiration. Stepping to a drawer, she drew it open, and rummaged, rummaged again, took out all the contents, her face growing paler.

"She's not committed suicide," said she, in the tone of definite statement.

"Eh?" said Mr. Adair.

"She's taken my stocking—and there was five pounds, ten shillings, in it," answered Mrs. Todd. "Five pounds, ten shillings, can go a long way," she added, staring into the disheveled drawer.

Mrs. Adair, after a long pause, in which was only the hiss of the gas in the narrow burner, took the now sleeping baby in her arms, wrapped a shawl round it, touched her husband upon the shoulder.

"We'll go home now, father," she said.

"Aye, aye, we may as well go home," he agreed, getting up.

"You've ta'en it badly, puir man," said Mrs. Todd, looking with horror at her sister.

"We've found the baby—now we must find Ellen," said Mrs. Adair.

"You'll get my letter either to-night or in the morning," remarked the poor relative.

Adair raised his hand and waved it oddly at her.

"I'll send ye that five pounds ten," he said. "I'll make a point—dinna worry—I'll see to that. Aye, aye, we'll manage that. Now we'll go, I think."

So they came home again to 25 Crown Street, Mrs. Adair carrying the sleeping baby, held close, her head turned every now and then to scrutinize her husband with a hard anxiety. He fumbled so long for his key, that she took it upon her to knock on the glass door, and Walter Lane opened to them. They entered, and all walked, by one impulse, into Louise's room.

"Oh, she's looking better," said Mrs. Adair.

"That's Ellen's baby!" cried Louise, sitting up. "Where's Ellen?"

"Ellen's coming—coming later. That will be all right," answered Mrs. Adair, soothingly, her face as pallid as her daughter's.

She had thought that one day she might take the baby into her keeping; but Ellen, she had known, she would never forgive. Now! Well, now she hardly knew what she thought, now that Ellen was lost.

"Dinna lie, wumman, damn it, dinna lie!" cried old Adair, to everybody's consternation. He turned to Louise, and said he: "That's one thing rectifeed the nicht. We must try and bear up and look for her. It behooves us tae dae our best."

"Where is she? What is it? Tell me all," begged Louise.

Lane sat down and clutched her hand.

"Be calm, dearest," he said. "Be calm."

"Tell me, tell me!"

"She's run away, Louise, but we'll——"

"She's—— Oh, perhaps she's committed suicide," Louise sobbed.

"No, no, lass, we have—— O God!—we have proof she didna do that," said Mr. Adair. "She's just run away."

"But tell me all. Where has she gone? How do you know she's alive?"

"Well, well, now—now, Louise, it behooves us to be calm, but she——" began Adair.

"Father!" cautioned his wife, frowning at him, and glancing at Louise and back at him again.

“She took some money with her—enough to keep her for a while,” said old Adair to Louise. “She’s not dead. Now that will do just now. I’m glad you’re here wi’ her,” he said, turning to Walter. “Has anybody been when we were out?”

“No.”

“The postman?”

“No.”

“Well, the post’s past now,” Adair growled.

“Only the boy with the evening paper, that was all,” said Lane. He had evidently taken the paper from the boy at the door, and, returning to Louise’s room, tossed it on the foot of the bed.

Mr. Adair now picked it up, by force of habit.

“Well, wife,” he said, “ye can put that bairn to bed now. I’ll put the kettle on, and Mr. Lane can get a cup of koko-ah, and I’m sure he’d like to wait a bit till we can think what to do—calmly like, as the doctor advised. Says he to me, ‘You must keep calm if you want to be able to tackle things again.’ ”

“I would, indeed,” said Lane.

Mr. Adair sank down on the foot of the bed, all heaped up again in his broken attitude, so that Lane looked at him troubled. The old man suddenly recollected himself, gathered himself together, sat a little more erect, and opened his evening paper, subconsciously, stunned-looking, a pitiable figure, a colossus of weakness.

“While we’re waitin’,” he said, in a way that made Louise cry softly, snuffling—the pathos of his broken figure and voice, even while he tried to practice fortitude, drawing her away a moment from her dreads on behalf of Ellen, dreads too terrible for words, “while we’re waitin’ we may as well see if there’s anything good in the ‘Notes and Co-ments.’ ”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE fact was that Ellen had been, in two words that she kept repeating to herself under her breath, “fed up.”

The baby, too, stood between her and gayety. Men were lucky! And what a fuss had been made over it all. She was sure that it was only ill-luck that had singled her out for disgrace. Plenty of girls, still going about free, and setting men on the jump, looking after them, knew all that she knew, but they had been lucky.

She felt very sorry for herself. For the baby she entertained no pity. Her imagination was not of the kind to conceive of it growing up, and her own emotions had never been of the kind to make her, at this juncture, be moved by any feeling under the reign of which she might conceive of anyone having sorrows of heart. She was not one to wonder if the joys that might come to her little daughter would compensate for the ambushed sorrows, though it was not by any faith in the ultimate, if not a present, goodness for all, that she was incurious, heedless, regarding the child’s future.

She was just an empty girl—in so far as such thoughts went. They were utterly foreign to her. She could not have understood, had any faithful optimist, or unselfish pessimist, spoken to her of the baby in this wise. Such thoughts would have been as from another world, even as Pater’s *Child in the House* might have been in Hebrew, for all she could make of it, staining the volume with cold-creamed thumbs.

Ellen saw through it all now. Marriage was just the same thing as her “fling” at Peebles, but all with a long face, sometimes even accompanied by family worship in the evening. She was as empty as her mother, without her mother’s unquestioning belief in certain inculcated moralities. What to Mrs. Adair was the last disgrace of a girl, was to Ellen a pathetic accident. She was sorry for herself.

Mrs. Todd expressed no opinion one way or another. She gave Ellen hints on the care of infancy, and Ellen accepted them. But Mrs. Todd showed no opinion on the rights or wrongs of having infants out of wedlock. Mrs. Todd, even, coming on a joke in a paper that had been wrapped round a pair of boots of the lodger’s, brought home by him from a cobbler’s, read her the joke, as she might have read to any friend sitting across the fire from her—

not under a ban of displeasure and to be reminded of the ban by curled nostrils, rustlings, aspersions, and contemptuous silences. Nor when Ellen, plucking up heart, laughed at the joke, did it become evident that Mrs. Todd had been laying a trap for her to make her laugh, and then to look at her with gaze of wonder and horror, as who should say: “You can *laugh*, too!” Mrs. Todd was not like that.

Ellen plucked up heart. She looked back on the passions of Peebles with soft eyes, into which tears would come at the smell of this house into which she had been brought—just because of her *fun*. The baby puked and had to be cleaned. It was not amusing.

When occasion offered, she had been wont to say, “I love babies!”—that is, when any of the boys were about, so that she might say it “frankly,” and open-eyed, looking at them, watching to see if they gave any little “game” twinkle back at her. But this baby she did not love. It was a drag upon her. It was a convict’s iron ball, to keep her feet from dancing the dance of life.

One afternoon, at the end of three weeks—or perhaps between three weeks and a month after her mother had brought her here, subdued, and wondering, and timid, she offered to go out to the grocer’s with a bad egg that Mrs. Todd said would have to be returned.

What a life! As Ellen had not, so far, been across the threshold, her aunt, thinking a brief outing (especially with a definite objective) would be good for her, eagerly accepted the offer. Mrs. Todd went into the lodger’s room, and Ellen, stepping to a drawer, in which she knew this poor relation kept her small savings in an old stocking for purse, plunged her hand well down, and drew forth something which she tucked into her sleeve.

She went out then.

“I’ve got your egg,” she called to Mrs. Todd, who was tidying the lodger’s room.

“All right. Haste ye back.”

CHAPTER XXVII

EDINBURGH (as many have noticed) is very much of a large village. If anything unfortunate happens to a member of any of its sets, upon, let us say, a Saturday, most of the members of the set to which he or she belongs will have full knowledge of the misfortune by Monday evening. All will have knowledge of it before the week be out—at the very farthest. In that sense is Edinburgh but a large village, as well as in many others. And though Jimmie Ray had ceased to visit at Crown Street some time before the Peebles-for-Pleasure episodes, he had news of the family often.

The reason for the cessation of his visits was simply that his heart was wounded. He could not go back again to be wounded further; but though staying away from sight of the radiant eyes that mocked him, he brooded upon them, dwelt upon them. He even, it is to be surmised, had some agony of pleasure in the ineffectuality of his long faithfulness. The lugubrious mood seemed to fit him; and he was, at any rate, at the age when a sense of melancholy is apt to come to young men.

Before he passed out of that woeful period, he heard of Ellen's baby, and the melancholy which was beginning to be a pose became a reality again. Then he was told of Ellen's disappearance—and anon his father died. And, his father dying, there seemed no incentive for him to stay in Edinburgh. Walker had been non-existent for many years, only a gilt name over the door.

Jimmie sold the business, and departed to London, to seek forgetfulness of the old life, and begin a new life. Nor, with his knowledge, did he find any difficulty in finding employment. Upon his arrival in London, he sought out a wholesale house with which he had been in the habit of dealing, introduced himself, had lunch with the manager—who listened with interest to the tale Jimmie told of his desire to see London methods, and considered that all he had heard of Scotsmen's "conscientiousness" was true, amazingly, amusingly true.

He introduced Jimmie to a retail jeweler in Oxford Street, one who knew the firm of Walker and Ray, and who gave the young man a billet. This jeweler found him a good man, always stolidly courteous, never inflated by successful sales, never rude to customers who had to be propitiated, never too responsive to those who were inclined to be familiar in their chatter.

Little happened in his life during the next months. He became more dapper, allowing a tailor to have entire control of the cut of his garments. He grew a mustache, and allowed the barber to have entire control of it. Doubtless he had plenty of cogs in him that might have met the cogs in other revolving lives, but he kept aloof from humanity, surrounded by a little space of melancholy.

Time passed. Nothing dynamic seemed to happen for about two years. Then, one afternoon, a boy in buttons came into the shop, and said that a lady, in a flat in Patchouli Mansions, along the street, had hurt her finger by wearing rings that were too tight. She wished somebody, please, as soon as possible, to come and get the rings off.

The manager was about to send the watch-repairer; but the chief, coming to inquire into what was wanted, said: "No, I think—would you mind going, Mr. Ray? You know how to see to it?"

"Yes," said Ray. "Certainly."

From the watchmaker's tool-drawer he extracted the necessary files, and feeling in a waistcoat pocket to be sure he had his lens, he departed squarely, with genteelly swaying coat-tails, in the wake of the lift-boy. He asked no questions regarding the status of the client, to whom he mounted in the little box of an elevator.

"Here's the door, sir," said the boy, opening the cage, and stepping out upon the third floor.

As Jimmie raised his hand to ring, the door opened.

"Do come in," a voice trilled. "My hand is so painful."

By long practice, Jimmie merely bowed to the dim figure and entered. It was its hands, not its face, with which he had to do. It pulled a curtain aside with a rattle of brass rings on a pole overhead, and holding out a hand at once, as it walked into a heavily carpeted room, sank down into a seat. Jimmie bent over the upraised fingers, an expressionless salesman from the jeweler's shop, living his own life, hidden behind a perfect frock-coat, black tie, and an impervious manner.

"Oh, yes, I can do this for you," he said.

He slipped the chamois-leather (in which he had carried the exquisite little files) under the finger that had to receive his attention, bringing its ends over the other fingers, so that if his file slipped it would not prick, for jewelers' assistants learn to do everything in the manner called "just so."

"Please close the hand now," he requested. "There is no doubt this ring will have to be cut. The ordinary washing in hot water, with plenty of soap
_____"

He put his lens in his eye and began, carefully and precisely. At length he removed one ring neatly, and looked at it deferentially as he withdrew it, held it up, and peered at it through his glass (he more interested in rings and a neat job, than in the woman who wore the rings), and he found it a good ring.

“Not spoiled?” she asked.

“Not at all, madam. It will not show after the repairing. I think you could get the other one over a knuckle, now that I have removed this, if you wash the hands in soapy water. They are very beautiful rings. That one is exquisite, and it seems a pity to cut it at all, if——”

“How much do you think these rings would fetch?” and she held forth the other hand, exhibiting both, side by side, so that he could take a good stock of all their glittering ornaments in a comprehensive survey. “Roughly,” she added.

Jimmie removed the lens from his eye.

“You know what *I* am,” said the young woman of the rings. “And I might want to raise the wind on them some——”

He looked up, astonished.

“You!” he cried.

He had been down on his right knee, his left elbow on left thigh, her hand held in that palm, firmly, while he worked. He remained in this posture as he broke out with the exclamation.

Ellen looked at him in amazement, drawing back her hands, then slowly raised her head. She, too, gasped.

“Jimmie Ray!” she cried out.

For a moment she was almost like a malefactor at bay; but only for a moment. The sense as of being discovered fled before an indignation at Jimmie, the stolid, on one knee there, gazing at her in horror. Who was he to be horrified in this wise? He belonged to the slow set that had no knowledge of the fun of life whatever, the set that make life slow, and, in their lack of any sense of the thrills in existence, are simply *sumphs*.

“You didn’t mean that, Ellen?” he said. “Oh, you didn’t mean—you knew me and were joking—you——”

“What do you look like that for?” she asked, drawing up slightly, and then brought her knees close together, put her hands upon her knees, sat bolt upright, looking at him. “Och, yes, I mean it!” she said. “I didn’t recognize you with that mustache of yours, and your forehead kind of creeping up in among your hair.”

Jimmie's mouth opened slowly, and he drew a long, catching breath, like the breath a child draws before bursting into tears. It had been his impression that he was simply attending on a stylishly appareled dweller in a central flat, and he had been wholly incurious regarding her. But it was Ellen Adair, and she had not recognized him, and she had meant all that she had said in the speech that had startled him into looking at her.

"You're as slow as ever, Jimmie," she remarked. "You never once looked at me!"

Still he did not believe the incident was real. Less the Puritan in him than what had been the diffident and sentimental lover, or less that, perhaps, than merely the ordinary decent young man, was smitten with pity and horror at all the tokens (as it were) flung at him, now that he was thus shaken into observation. He felt himself in the presence of a life astray—willfully astray, it is true, but to be preyed upon as well.

The flaunting of the head, the hard boldness of the bright eyes, a strange suggestion of something worn in the skin, faint, but there, and tragic in the daylight to wholly sober eyes—to say nothing of the eyes that had once been infatuated before this eidolon—a new pouting, and yet slight drooping of the red mouth, something just a little tired in it; an odor, an atmosphere, a sense in the room, which he had paid no heed to before, all this whelmed him now. But as he pitied, and was numb in horror, he felt that she desired no pity—and would spurn pity.

A thought of the man (or men) who had aided her hither made him suddenly tense and furious. He wanted to take the scoundrel's neck in his hands and throttle him. And in the moment of that impulse he rose, his teeth clenched, rose slowly, as if dragging himself up by some awful strength of his shoulders, his hands down, closing them with such a grip that the small files he held in the left hand cut the palm.

Ellen was afraid. She remembered all she had read in the papers of women murdered in flats. She went pale, and her eyes glared at him for a moment, as she shrank back. But when he broke out with "I want to kill the man!" she was relieved. She understood the reason for his attitude, reminiscent of a gesture of an actor in some play she had seen.

"Don't worry your head," she said.

"I'll kill——!!!"

"Och, don't be silly!"

He stepped back a pace or two.

"Can't you go home, Ellen?" he cried.

Then feeling as if, on saying the name "Ellen," he was in a nightmare, and that somehow this was not Ellen, he kept repeating the name, hoping that some wizardry in the repetition would make her Ellen again. He leaned toward her, and spoke, in a ghastly voice, like a sleep-walker: "Ellen! Ellen! Ellen!"

She was afraid. She was horribly afraid that he was going mad and might become desperate. She knew how to humor a lecherous man who had "wined"; she often found, indeed, a great deal of sport in playing with a man who had "wined." It was amusing and easy to wheedle him; and, while wheedling, there was sport in making him ridiculous.

But she had no idea how to handle a man who was mad. She had but a frantic desire to get rid of Jimmie before anything happened, as once, when Ellice (a maid provided for her by her paramour of that period) was bitten by a snapping dog, she had but one desire—to hurry Ellice off to a chemist. She had believed that Ellice might begin to bark, and try to bite her, having heard that such were symptoms of hydrophobia. She thought now that perhaps to order would be better than to beseech, so she leaped to her feet and stepped back.

"Och, go on!" she said. "I don't want anything to do with anybody—anybody—of the old days."

Jimmie's eyes changed, and she was relieved again. It had been an ordeal for her. The most sensual man that she had ever met she could, by a glance, make to fall back from her if she wished. But the madness of a man who had no thought of what the French call "conquest" was a thing she had been uncertain how to face.

He looked at her without expression—like a funny little boy in a frock-coat.

"Ellen!" he said.

But it still seemed as if, somehow, this was not Ellen—his Ellen. And he could not make her his again. He stooped, unaware of his action, and picked up the dropped scrap of chamois-leather, the light color of which, it lying on the carpet, had caught his eye. And then he wiped blood from the back of his hand, wiped and wiped. It oozed between the fingers. He could see no cut. He opened the palm, looking for the source of the blood, and it was all sticky and red in the palm where the files had abraded it.

"Go on! I feel so horrid when I see blood," cried Ellen.

He moved toward the door, but went so slowly, almost halting at every step, that Ellen swept past him and opened it. He continued out on the landing in that stunned walk; and there suddenly he burst into tears, or what

supplied the place of tears, a hideous sound of tears, his chest heaving, his eyes burning.

Ellen stretched out along the wall and pressed the button of the electric bell. Seeing that action, he wheeled round upon her again.

“Don’t you want to go back? Wouldn’t you go back?” he asked.

“I can’t go back,” she said, shaking her head, thinking it better to have his pity than a mad outbreak.

He looked at her with such gentle, wholly uncensuring, wholly pitying expression, that she suddenly veered again.

“Och!” she broke out, and turned back into the entranceway of the flat.

He heard a deriding “Toodooloo!” and then was confronting the sheeny panels of the closed door, standing alone on the landing, and hearing the hum and rumble of traffic coming up and echoing thinly overhead.

There came the rattle of the cage in the elevator-shaft, the hum of the ascent. The lift came up. The brass-buttoned boy in blue rattled the door open, and Jimmie stepped in, and descended again, looking foolishly at the cuts in his hand, mopping them with the chamois-leather, holding the hand out so as not to touch his dapper frock-coat.

“Cut your hand?” asked the elevator-boy.

“What?”

“Cut your hand, I say?”

“Eh? I beg your pardon?”

“I say you’ve cut your hand, sir,” said the boy, thinking that perhaps this shop-assistant replied thus as one who thought lift-boys should not make familiar remarks to jewelry-shop assistants, even though they both happened to serve (for the time being) the same “lydy” (with a wink) in the top flat.

“Oh, yes, so I have,” answered Jimmie. “I didn’t notice.”

“Balmy, she turned him balmy!” was the boy’s opinion. “Well, I’m bothered! Wouldn’t worry me!”

When Ellen turned back into her room again, she saw her face reflected in a long mirror on the wall, and walked over toward it, between two tables laden with silver photograph-frames, enshrining her favorite actors and actresses. She saw that her eyes were bright. She raised her head so that her neck pressed upon the thin necklace that she wore.

“Slow; oh, Lord, how slow! What a heavy sumph!” she said, addressing a print of Lola Montez on the wall. “No wonder I couldn’t stand him in Edinburgh. Cheek of him! I wonder what I’ll do? I’ll go and buy some rings there. I’ll take Teddy in, and he’ll buy up the shop for me.”

She posed to the glass, seeing how she would flaunt before the stolid Jimmie and let him see how much she cared for his opinion.

“He’ll have to sell me rings if I ask for them. I’ll make him show me all the trays in the shop. Damn him!”

But she knew she did not mean it all. She knew that these were wild words, and that if her Teddy should chance to observe anything that attracted him in the window of that shop, and, in an impulse of charity, desire to bestow the bauble upon her, she would say she didn’t want it—shan’t have it!—won’t take it!—don’t like it!—don’t like the shop!

For the present she went to wash her hands and see if the other ring would now come off to the coaxing of hot water and a lather of soap. She had just succeeded in removing it, when her French maid arrived, with the three subdued knocks that always announced her. Ellen opened the door, heard the familiar “Ma’mselle!” and the girl handed her a letter.

“The possman give me ziz lettair to save hees legs,” said she.

Ellen opened the letter and read a favorite word of her own, written to her now. She stared at it, hardly believing her eyes.

“Toodooloo—can’t come back. Better clear off before rent is due.—TEDDY.”

There is an element of uncertainty about the free-love life. It was with “Toodooloo” that she had left, for Teddy, the last admirer, when his funds began to come to her in trickling instead of profuse stream. It was with “Toodooloo” that she now confronted the future. Still, there were other pebbles on the beach. The blow was severe enough. Her quoting of that proverb, quietly, was no sign that she would not break out in fury, later.

“Before you take off your hat, Ellice, run and pay the jewelers down below for cutting off a ring for me. Tell them I want to settle.”

“Oh-h-h! Your hand!” cried Ellice. “Your ring? It hurt you? Oh, fie, that was too bad!”

After the trilling-voiced Ellice departed, Ellen walked to the window, beginning to talk to herself, in a low voice, that mounted up slowly, louder, louder, till at last it was almost a shriek, reviling Teddy, reviling men, reviling Jimmie—but no, she stopped at “And as for Jimmie Ray——!” She looked out on the tops of omnibuses, taxicabs, hooded drays, tops of hats of the seething crowd below, till her maid returned. She stood still then, only with occasional twitches of her lip after the outburst.

"The gentleman says it is too insignificant—too small a job for make a charge," Ellice told her.

"Oh? Which one did you see? What was he like?" asked Ellen.

"Zee one with heavy face, ver' sad, as if"—she laughed gayly—"poor, or in love with the imposseeble. I think from his voice—*Ecossais!*"

"Scotch? Like me?"

"Yes, Ma'mselle!"

A pang of homesickness struck Ellen. She realized that what she had said to Jimmie, merely to waken his pity, was true. She could not go back. And it was not so bad, after all, to go home to tea and toast and boiled eggs in Crown Street.

She walked back to the window. The voices of cockney boys came up, "*Star! Star! Special!*" reminding her of the cries of "*Dispatch and News! 'Spatch! News!*" all along the pavement of Princes Street, at the Register House, at Waverley Steps, at the corner of Saint Andrew Street, Hanover Street, Frederick Street, Charlotte Street, Hope Street, when evening was falling, and lights were being lit. Then she tossed her head.

"Och, no," she said. "It was awful stale till I went out into the world. I wonder if Louise is improving herself for her professor still, up in the magazine-room of the Free Library? Free Library! Style! Mother would think I was stylish, if she saw me now!" She turned round. "It makes me smile—the way shopmen look when I ask things to be sent home," she said to Ellice.

"Makes you laugh?"

"Yes. 'What address, madam?' they say. And when I say, 'Patchouli Mansions,' there is just a look on their faces. Oh, I see it! It is as if they said, 'Ah, I wondered. I wondered if it was a lady of fashion, or a lady of—what shall we say?' "

"It does not matter what *zees* men think," said the maid, "zees shopkeeper!"

"If you really don't think it matters," said Ellen, "then you may as well know that that *Ecossais* assistant was the one who came up to cut my ring, and he did look as if he was sorry for me."

"For himself, I t'ink," answered the flatterer, "if he look sorry. Your countrymen are so droll. I t'ink they always so sorry when ozer men enjoy life."

And, as she considered this cynical suggestion with a certain return of gayety, it may be accepted that Ellen had perhaps felt the meeting with

Jimmie—he of the Iona marble hatpins, the slim, gold muff-chain, and the other diffident tokens of a dumb affection. But she dismissed him from her mind as she sallied forth (the most stylish of the stylish) to supper at the café of her choice.

So would she continue until the day came when, being accosted there by a new customer, she would, finding his face familiar, naïvely inquire: “I seem to remember your face. Have you ever been home with me before?” And the man would flee from her, hardly knowing why, but made continent for a week or two; and Ellen would wonder at his flight, and, considering to herself that men are queer, cast forth the net of her glances elsewhere.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE day-train from London rocketed northward, and Jimmie looked out on the changing landscape, sitting motionless, jaw in hand, elbow on narrow window-ledge. The northern suburbs of London were passed, and still he sat so. Even a monoplane and a biplane, up in air together, from Hendon, circling and sweeping, like monster dragon-flies attempting the lark's spiral flight—even these devices of man (making the dream of flight practical) did not excite him. He did not move. He merely raised his eyes and looked at them with hardly any mental note.

"Will you take lunch, sir?" came a voice.

He turned his head stolidly.

"I beg your pardon?" he said.

"Will you take lunch?"

"Yes, I'll have lunch, thank you."

The attendant passed on. Jimmie resumed his old attitude, sitting there motionless, till his arm took cramp, and long after. Physical conditions were second issues to him, for under that heavy exterior was a dull and numb anguish in the unfathomable depths.

When he heard a voice piercing through the rattle and rumble of the cars, a voice with a note in it as though this was not the first time it had hailed him, he dragged himself back to attention to his surroundings, and, as though not quite sure of what had recalled him, after all, he gave again his heavy: "I beg your pardon?"

"Luncheon is ready in the dining-car," he was told by an attendant, who stood in the corridor, pointing engineward.

"Oh, yes; thank you."

Jimmie rose, to find his leg cramped. He maneuvered his way to the dining-car, swaying along the corridors, through car after car. They seemed to make an endless string, but at last he came to the dining-car, where a suave, stout, head waiter ushered him to a seat. There again he nursed his jaw, and stared at the flying fields, the low rising and falling knolls.

An elderly woman came and sat opposite him. Jimmie took what was given him by the steward; then, glancing up and meeting the woman's eye

fixed upon him, with vacancy or indignation, he was uncertain which, he wondered if he should say "I beg your pardon?" again. She appeared as one who expected some attention. He looked at her plate, her glass. On the wall was a water-bottle rack, with gently dancing water-bottle in it.

"Can I give you some?" he asked, clutching the neck of the carafe.

"Thank you."

He filled her glass, replaced the carafe, and again ate, mechanically, and stared out of the window. Brick villages drew suddenly level and bobbed past. Church-towers on hills riveted his gaze, and kept his head turning slowly, as he stared at them, munching. He continued to eat what was offered him. The woman opposite rose and departed; and, his bill being put down before him, he paid and tipped, and wavered back again, along the swaying cars, to his lonely compartment.

There he sat, swerving and swinging through chaos, from which he looked out on the world, till dusk came, and a light glimmered over him, like a great jewel set in the ceiling, and a smoky sunset smoldered outside, beyond the wet fields, and shifted about, now its red core level with him, and, next moment, while the train swayed, sweeping out of sight rearward—anon coming sailing back, now glowing over a ridge of hills, now twinkling through trees, from which the starlings rose in eddies, now glowing at the end of a climbing village street, with women at the doors, and the gas-lighter trudging uphill, pole on shoulder, like a pantomime-fairy in clogs and fustian.

These villages, glimpsed and lost, made Jimmie feel aware of a world full of strangers, people he had never known and never would know, all thinking their own thoughts, living their own lives. Dazedly he wanted to wish well to all these villagers and say: "God help you all. It's a queer world. Maybe it all doesn't matter so very much."

"Dinner ready in the dining-car!" brought him to his feet again. Evidently they did not ask if one wanted dinner—just took it for granted; or perhaps they had asked him already, and he had said: "Yes."

He maneuvered forward to the dining-car again, and found it already lit, showing white-covered tables and shining knives and spoons and forks. Something cosy and homelike (it was as if one came home to a meal and lights and comfort, while still travelling) struck a tremor in his heart. He sat down where directed, and to this meal had no *vis-à-vis*.

It was still ruddy enough, and golden enough, in the world without, to see (despite the reflections of the inner lights in the windows) the gradual roll of hills, the twisting of streams, the creamy gable-ends of occasional

houses among trees, a flash of road with a tittupping dogcart. The horse shied, and its driver checked it; and that scene, too, was left behind in the past. Then there followed nothing but rolling hills, low hills, with slow, deliberate flanks, tawny in the dying day, streams snaking and twining among them, showing dark and light, deep or shallow, showing steep reflections of deep-green trees, showing molten pools—there and gone, then more roll upon roll of the huddling hills. And as Jimmie munched, slowly and moodily, the last fires of sunset faded and died.

When he returned to his compartment-seat, the light was bright in the center of the ceiling. This stolid and expressionless dreamer, this “sumphish” lover, was something like the “mute, inglorious Miltons.” There are, of course, no mute, inglorious Miltons, else they would not be mute; but there are the mute and inglorious who are aware that they are not Miltons, despite all the lyric or threnodic impulse in their hearts.

“I would have done my best to make her happy,” he said, sitting in the hard light of the carriage, sparks from the rushing locomotive streaming past in the night outside. “I think she never greatly cared for me.”

“Tickets, please!”

“Eh? I beg your pardon? Oh—tickets! Are we *there*?”

Yes, he was there. He was back to the town he had left two years before, left because the fragments of his shattered dream had made it an unbearable place. He had come back to it because, in a cold world, it was the only place with a savor of home. To be a man with lost hopes is bad enough; but to have lost hope, and to be an exile, is worse.

He left his bag and trunk in the luggage-office; and as he came up the Waverley Steps into a windy evening, he heard the old song in the chimney-tops, saw the Old City soaring in the old, grand way up into the wind-swept indigo night, its dark cliff pricked with irregular lights, saw the dotted lights of the climbing streets going up from the new town, and as his heart filled with it all, a little mob of ragged vagabonds surrounded him with husky cries: “Matches!”—“*Murray’s Diary! Murray’s Diary!*” And above all he heard the chanting, here on this side of the street, there across the street, east, west: “White heather—good luck! White heather—good luck!”

He acted as one still in a daze. Whether Nature was looking after him, and considered that in this condition he required to be fed well, or whether the dull and comfortable glow from glazed doors across the way appealed to him, he crossed the street, swung open one of these doors, and found himself in the secluded comfort of the R. B. restaurant, where he sat down at a table. He pondered the card bearing the number of the waiter who attended upon

that table, pondered it as though he expected it to blossom forth, at top of its stalk-like holder, into a menu-card. He used often to lunch and dine here with his father. Old Ray had relished the place. "I like the R. B.," he was wont to say, "because you see the same waiters there a long time, and when a man's getting old, and the friends falling away, there is great pleasure in the sight of every kent face."

A waiter presented a menu-card to Jimmie.

"Oh, it's you!" said Jimmie, glancing up. "Still here."

The waiter bowed.

"You're a stranger," he responded.

"I've just come back from London," Jimmie explained.

"On holiday, or permanent?"

"For good," said Jimmie.

"For good," repeated the waiter, and then added something which Ray, straying again, lost.

"I beg your pardon?" he said.

"Gang east, gang west, hame's best," the waiter repeated, and then gently gave advice to Jimmie on a course of diet, advice that Jimmie welcomed, because it saved him from a concentrated survey of the various possibilities of refection offered by the card before him.

He ate to more than repletion. He astonished the waiter with his false appetite. The cashier's glass box, at the far end of the restaurant, reminded him of Louise Adair's glass box in Hubert Beethouse's music-shop. It was not a crowded hour at the R. B., and Jimmie, sipping coffee at last, sat staring at the white-capped, white-aproned chef, who stood beside the grill. He stared at him so vacantly, and so long, that, an hour after, when he went to bed, in a room above, and closed his worn eyes, he saw before him innumerable chefs drift past, one after the other, a little, yellow flame of fire, under a grill, drifting past with each.

In the morning, he went out to look for lodgings, had his box and bag sent thither, and then, noon being come, lunched at the Edinburgh Café. He sat there, a stolid effigy against the wall, with no look of interest upon those who came and went to and from interior rooms, or drifted up and down the stairs opposite his table.

He sat there considering the inhabitants of 25 Crown Street, and his duty to them. What did they know of Ellen? Should they be told what he knew? When he went out again into airy Princes Street—with its slow-pacing citizens, its slow-travelling cable-cars, its rustling dames making the street

to clear before them, as they swept from car to shop, from shop to carriage; its porters putting out or taking down sun-blinds; its dudish clerks going out to lunch, or to deliver invoices, with a walking-cane; its coarse-voiced vanmen, its wandering visitors strolling and staring and swinging kodaks; its touting gray-hatted coach-drivers, crying “Roslin! Roslin!”—“Forth Bridge!”—when he heard again the chanting, along the curb, of “White heather—good luck! White heather—good luck!” he was still uncertain where to go.

He did not yet feel ready to visit the fellows of his trade, to spy out the lie of the land, and gather data for a consideration of the question where, and how, he was to make a fresh start. So he crossed over to the gardens, and sat there on a bench, while sparrows chirped around him constantly, and occasional pigeons fluttered down and strutted before him in expectation of crumbs. Some time later—he knew not how long he had sat on that bench of the sparrow-haunted gardens (like a scarecrow in an aviary)—he rose and strolled past the Scott Monument, into a door at the base of which the seekers for a bird’s-eye view of the city, and its rolling environs, were going in twos and threes, even as of yore.

He seemed rather to be led than to walk over to the Market Corner, and down to the washrooms, where, after the refreshment of ablution, and a final brief hesitancy, he passed into the last stages of “making up his mind.” He moved on, jostled into several times, past the Register House. He did not hear the “Where the hell are you going? Can’t you look where you’re going?” of a porter, who bumped into him while turning to look at a sumptuous and garish woman. The porter, doubtless, on seeing with whom he collided, considered, on a brief inspection, that Jimmie was not of the upper classes, to be apologized to, but one who could be sworn at.

But Jimmie heard not, felt not. He was looking down Leith Street. He saw the new name over his old shop. In small letters, under that new name, was *Late Walker and Ray*. The place farther down, that had been Hyke’s book-shop, where Ellen had worked (and never told him, always going to and coming from it with cocking head and averted eyes) had changed to a confectioner’s. Jimmie saw the heaped caramels in tissue-paper, the heaped nut-chocolate. In the middle of the window, the gleaming arm of a candy-stretcher turned hypnotizingly.

He watched it for a spell, at the cost of more rude comments, for this is the East End of Princes Street; and then he made up his mind. Half-an-hour later, he rang the bell at 25 Crown Street.

Stolid though he was, when he rang that door-bell he felt as if all life was an hallucination. Or he was like a stunned onlooker. How often he had

come here, in the old days, drawn by the gray and blue and violet sparkle of Ellen's eyes, content if, between bantering of other youths, she shot him a gleam. How often he had gone away, feeling that maybe she was just joking with them, uplifted when she came out into the corridor, downcast when she merely nodded a good-night.

Tom opened to him.

"It's you, Jimmie! It's you, Jimmie! Come in, man! Where have you sprung from? Come into the front room. Here is Jimmie Ray, father."

Jimmie entered, and found Mr. Adair looking, round the *Evening Dispatch*, at a baby on the floor, a baby that laughed and waved plump palms at him, and trickled saliva and bubbles from her pouting mouth.

Old Adair rose.

"How are you, James?" he said. "You're a stranger. You're just in time for tea."

It might have been only a month since he had seen Jimmie, instead of more than two years.

The table, indeed, was set already. The old tile was there beside the cups, waiting for the teapot to be put on it. Mrs. Adair entered, extending her hand.

"It's never Jimmie Ray!" she exclaimed.

"It's me, Mrs. Adair," said James.

He felt a melancholy in the house, but a masked melancholy, or one unspoken.

"You're looking older, James," Mr. Adair commented.

"I've been away a good while," Jimmie explained.

"You've not lost the Scotch voice," said old Adair.

"I haven't a musical ear," Ray replied. "I believe it is the musical ear that makes some——"

"Get away!" Tom interrupted. "You were a great singer, man."

"Sit down," said Mr. Adair.

Tom wondered what brought Jimmie back. Was this just the visit of an old friend, returned to the city? He remembered how Jimmie had stopped coming to the house long before the summer in Peebles.

"Are you going to sit down, Mrs. Adair?" asked Jimmie, hand on back of a chair, to sit down, but bobbing up suddenly.

"No, no; just sit down. I'm getting tea ready."

“Aye, aye, sit down, James. Mak’ yersel’ at hame. So you’re back in the Auld Toon,” Adair drawled.

“I’ll just run and mask the tea,” said the mother.

Jimmie noted the change. The stolid block noticed things. He remembered how Mr. Adair had been corrected often for use of the word “mask.” He had recalled these corrections, in London, when the wife of the manager of the wholesale jeweler’s emporium had said, “Tea’s brewed—come along and have a dish of tea, Mr. Ray,” she being a Cumberland woman. He had thought how petty was the objection to a word of *patois*; but only an unjust critic (or a person who considers that only clamant things are noteworthy) could call him petty for noting Mrs. Adair’s use of the word then.

He sat down, and Tom and Mr. Adair did likewise. The baby remained on the hearthrug, waiting for the recommencement of peep-bo behind the *Dispatch*.

“And how’s London?” asked Tom.

“Oh, fine.”

“Did you like it down there?”

“It’s all right. How you getting on yourself?”

“I just go on.”

“Still playing billiards?” Jimmie asked, making conversation.

“No, I don’t often play billiards now.”

“Golfing?”

“Just in the holidays I have a round sometimes. I go to the baths sometimes in the evenings.”

“The baths are handy,” said Mr. Adair. “Peep-bo! Peep-bo!”

“Yes, just round the corner, as it were. I remember,” said Jimmie.

Old Adair was thinking to himself: “I wonder what brings him back. I wonder if it’s just the auld house, and for auld time’s sake. I suppose he knew, before he went to London, about her. I expect everybody knows. Maybe he has an old, lingering affection for her, and wonders if we have any news.” Then it struck him suddenly, so that his hand trembled with excitement: “Maybe he has some news of Ellen to tell us!”

“Are you stopping in Edinburgh?” he asked.

“Yes.”

Mrs. Adair entered with the teapot, and covered it with the cosy, slipping that woollen helmet over it fussily. Then she glanced at the table, to see that

all was laid orderly, and nothing forgot.

“Have you set for Louise?” asked the old man.

“She’s not coming to-night—she wrote——”

“Oh, aye, of course, I remember,” said Adair. He turned to Jimmie. “Louise generally comes up once a week to tea. This is her night, but she couldn’t come——”

“She’s married, is she?” asked Jimmie, in a husky voice, and cleared his throat—Tom, heavy-eyed, watching him.

“Of course you didn’t know,” answered Mrs. Adair. “She married Walter Lane. I don’t recall if you ever met him.”

“Aye, you met him,” said Adair. “I can remember the meeting. Don’t you remember, there was a young lad from the church cam’ in, too, a young lad with spectacles? Man, I forget his name now. What was the name of yon—oh, well, it doesna matter.”

“I remember,” said Jimmie.

“Yes, she’s married to Walter Lane,” said Mrs. Adair. “I don’t think you would know her.”

“She’s greatly changed,” put in the old man. “But she’s very happy—she’s very happy. She’s awful interested in her husband’s work. I tell her she knows about as much of it as him——”

“What’s his business, then?” asked Jimmie, dully.

“He’s an architect,” explained Mrs. Adair.

“She can tell you the period of all the houses in a day’s walk,” continued Adair. “They’re always together, and she’s as much interested in it all as he is. She was telling me the other night about some of the old houses in the Canongate——”

“It is always a certain tie between them,” agreed Mrs. Adair. “And certainly Louise is genuinely interested in his business. She’s a real fine girl. Mr. Ray—James—will you take an egg?”

“I beg your—— Oh, yes, thank you.”

“Give him two,” said old Adair. “As the auld saying is, ‘Put on anither kipper and never heed the expense!’ Put on two eggs, wife. I’m only joking. Aye, aye.”

Mrs. Adair ran off. She was not altogether broken. She had the air of one who, suffering, had known compensations.

“Do you think her looking aulder?” asked Mr. Adair, after a pause, his flash of talkativeness having ceased abruptly on her departure.

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Jimmie. He had been horrified at her aging appearance, but he considered that there were other virtues in the world besides veracity.

“I wondered. I seem to see her getting grayer,” Mr. Adair drawled. “I wondered if you that have been away would see a marked change like. She’s had a lot of trouble.”

Tom rose awkwardly, looking almost furtively at Jimmie, and stood at the side of the rug, leant against the mantelpiece, like one waiting for something, or hoping—perhaps only wondering. He felt something more than the casual caller in Jimmie.

“Did ye ever see—did ye ever see——” began Mr. Adair; and his wife entered with the toast.

She looked round the silent trio. The baby crooned.

“Ah, baby, baby, ba-bee!” she said. “I’ll just bring the eggs in another minute.”

Off she went, looking back, with perplexed face, at the three men.

Mr. Adair took up the *Dispatch*, and, putting it in a pictured paper-rack that hung from the bell-pull by the fireside, he said in a low voice:

“Did ye ever, by any chance, run across—*her*, in London?”

Tom, hands in pockets, leaning against the mantelpiece, looked heavily at Jimmie. Jimmie was gazing at the fire. He raised his head slightly. Mr. Adair had his hand still on the paper, fumbling it into the rack. It was an operation that seemed to take a long time. He looked over his shoulder as he fumbled, looked almost timidly.

“Ye ken who I mean?” he said. “*Her*.”

There was a great capacity to go on bearing, in his voice.

“No,” said Jimmie. “No.”

“Aye, aye,” half sighed, half said Adair.

The baby broke out in petulance at lack of attention, and coming teeth. Mr. Adair caught her up and placed her on his knees.

“Come, come,” he said, and taking her tiny hand, gently waggled first its plump thumb and then each finger in succession, crooning to her: “This little pig went to market, this little pig stayed at home; this little pig had roast beef, and this little pig had none; but *THIS* little pig”—and he twiddled the little finger, and baby crowed in delight—“cried ‘Squeak, squeak, squeak!’ all the way home.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Ellen Adair* by Frederick Niven]